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OPINION METER

This week's poll:

Have you already read the newly enacted labor reform law?

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INSIDE

Crisis Mode

President Bush and leaders of Congress joined in promising urgent action to pump up the economy.

BUSINESS...Page 13

Heath Ledger, 28

Heath Ledger, the talented 28-year-old actor who gravitated toward dark, brooding roles, was found dead in a Manhattan apartment.

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Noted author's love affair with Saipan endures. **PAGE 5**

RESURRECTED SHANGHAI-SAIPAN FLIGHTS

'So far, so good'

LIVING ON THE EDGE JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Three local fishermen stand on the edge of the cliff while big waves crash on Banzai Cliff in Marpi yesterday. EMO warns the community of dangerous and life-threatening rip currents due to the large north swells generated by a strong cold front moving southeastward from Japan.

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSISTANT EDITOR

Fueled by strong market demand as well as the renminbi's robust exchange rate against the U.S. dollar, the resumed Shanghai-Saipan flights of China Eastern Airlines is enjoying great success so far.

See SO FAR on Page 4

Bill proposes tax on wealth

A bill raising taxes for high-income earners is back in the Legislature.

Rep. Justo S. Quitugua has reintroduced the legislation, which passed the House of Representatives but died in the Senate in the 15th Legislature.

Quitugua

Now number House Bill 16-5, the measure proposes to increase taxes for people who make over $60,000 a year. It comes in a bid to raise revenue for the cash-strapped government.

Currently, people who earn any amount above $50,000 are taxed 9

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Search called off due to high surf

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

The search and rescue operation for the missing Skaruno M. Renguul was called off yesterday despite no sightings of the victim due to dangerous surf conditions.

Department of Public Safety spokesperson Lei Ogumoro said the search teams ended their three-day search for Renguul at 6pm yesterday.

Ogumoro said over 20 police officers and firefighters from the Department of Public Safety and Commonwealth Ports Authority were involved in the search.

Ogumoro said the U.S. Navy, DPS Boating Safety Section and Dive Rescue Team, the Fire Division Search and Rescue Unit, CPA, and the Emergency Management Office conducted the operation.

She said the teams have been working

See SEARCH on Page 4

Study: False statements preceded war

ON THE NET

Center For Public Integrity: http://www.publicintegrity.org/default.aspx
Fund For Independence in Journalism: http://www.tfij.org/

By DOUGLASS K. DANIEL
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP)—A study by two nonprofit journalism organizations found that President Bush and top administration officials issued hundreds of false statements about the national security threat from Iraq in the two years following the 2001 terrorist attacks.

The study concluded that the statements "were part of an orchestrated campaign that effectively galvanized public opinion and, in the process, led the nation to war under decidedly false pretenses."

The study was posted Tuesday on the Web site of the Center for Public Integrity, which worked with the Fund for Independence in Journalism.

See STUDY on Page 4

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Local

Stores stop selling cough, cold medicines for infants

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
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REPORTER

Many major stores in the CNMI have already taken children's cold medicines off their shelves after the Food & Drug Administration issued a public health advisory about them on Jan. 18, 2008.

PHI pharmacist Dr. Theodore "Ted" R. Parker said that, to his understanding, parents were not following the directions properly and were accidentally overdosing their children.

"It was not based on the actual problems with the medicine itself; it was the fact that parents were not reading the directions on the back," said Parker.

A check with several major stores on island showed that the medicines were no longer being sold.

Parker said that since the public heath advisory was issued, all cough and cold medicines for infants have been taken off PHI's shelves.

Dolphins Wholesale's Jane Padiernos said the store has stopped selling selected infants' cough and cold medicines since the issuance of the notice.

Parker explained that once a manufacturer withdraws an actual product, it is no longer available for purchase.

"Even if I want it, I cannot get hold of it," he said.

Questions have been raised about the safety of these cough and cold medicines for infants and whether the benefits justify any potential risks from the use of these products in children, especially in those under 2 years of age.

Last year, fourteen popular cough and cold medicines for infants voluntarily pulled their products from store shelves after several reports of children overdosing. The Consumer Healthcare Products Association said that misuse is driving the voluntary withdrawal, not product safety.

The FDA said they are still worried that parents have not gotten the message despite all the publicity last year. Households may still carry infant-targeted drugs at home, or they might have bought the drugs meant for older children to give to their toddlers instead.

The government-issued warning includes the following children's medications:

- Dimetapp® Decongestant Plus Cough Infant Drops
- Dimetapp® Decongestant Infant Drops
- Little Colds® Decongestant Plus Cough
- Little Colds® Multi-Symptom Cold Formula
- PEDIACARE® Infant Drops Decongestant (containing pseudoephedrine)
- PEDIACARE® Infant

See STORES on Page 4

'Do not tamper with labor reform law'

By AGNES E. DONATO
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REPORTER

The Taotao Tano citizen group has warned lawmakers against tinkering with the labor reform law passed by the previous Legislature.

Gregorio Cruz, president of the group, said that constituents "will not be happy to hear you are now amending a law that protects the interest of all *taotao tano* (indigenous people) and U.S. citizens in our homeland."

"Give Public Law 15-108 a chance to be implemented and focus your efforts to build the economy rather than wasting time and money having endless debate over what has already been debated," Cruz said.

Taotao Tano's statement came after several lawmakers made known their plan to initiate changes to the labor law, which is scheduled for full implementation on Friday, Feb. 1, 2008.

Rep. Edward Salas, for one, said that while the labor law has good points, the Legislature must review and consider amending provisions believed to be damaging to businesses and workers.

The private sector has openly opposed some of the provisions of the labor law, including those that require periodic exit of nonresident workers and the prohibition of employment transfers unless allowed by administrative order.

But Cruz said that lawmakers should wait and see first the impact of the legislation before making any changes.

He maintained that P.L. 15-108 is a good law that addresses loopholes in the previous laws and benefits locals. He also noted that the public has had ample time to comment on the law before its implementation.

For the past two months, the Department of Labor has accepted public comments on regulations implementing the labor law.

But Deanne Siemer, legal counsel to the administration, noted that the Labor Department actually had been circulating the regulations for comments as early as May 2007, while the legislative drafting proceeded in the House. She said that most of the comments received were in favor of the plan.

House wants to hire more staff

The House of Representatives wants to hire additional staff for its two new members.

The Lower House, in session on Tuesday, adopted a resolution allowing for two additional employees for the legislative body whose membership increase from 18 to 20 this year.

The 2007 appropriation act, the last approved budget authority for the CNMI government, set a ceiling of 100 full time employees for the Lower House.

House Joint Resolution 16-1 states that the ceiling must be adjusted, as it does not include or fund the full-time employee positions of the two new House members.

The CNMI Constitution prohibits any government branch or agency to exceed personnel caps except when approved by legislative joint resolution.

Rep. Heinz Hofschneider authored the resolution, with Reps. David M. Apatang, Diego Benavente, and Ray N. Yumul signing on as co-sponsors.

House members increased from 18 to 20 as a result of last year's court order creating a fifth election precinct for Saipan. The Supreme Court decided to increase the Saipan lawmakers after determining that all residents, including nonresident workers, should be included for purposes of apportioning the House.

The court also said the increase, which is part of the redistricting plan, was needed to compensate for population changes since the last apportionment in 1990. ***(Agnes E. Donato)***

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Misplaced documents at Labor delays decision

BY FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

An appeal that was apparently misplaced at the Department of Labor's administrative hearing office has caused a dance company and a Polynesian dancer to wait for more than a year to finally get a decision in their case.

Labor Secretary Gil M. San Nicolas has reversed the Labor administrative hearing officer's decision that ordered Jacob M. Teuira, a Tahitian, to depart the CNMI for allegedly engaging in unlawful employment.

San Nicolas gave Teuira 45 days to file an application for employment as a nonresident worker.

The official ruled that the work that was considered illegal by the hearing officer was explained in the affidavit of the alleged employer. The employer in his affidavit stated that Teuira was actually not compensated.

"That should have been more clearly explained at the hearing, but the parties appeared without counsel and did not articulate well," said San Nicolas in reversing the Aug. 31, 2006 order issued by then administrative hearing officer and now Labor director Barry Hirshbein.

In his order, Hirshbein ruled that the appeal of Marino Promotions and Teuira was untimely and that the employee violated the Nonresident Worker Act.

"In addition, the current application is highly suspect. After careful consideration of all the facts in this case, the hearing officer determines that transfer relief is not warranted," he said.

Labor records show that Marino Promotions' expiration transfer employment application for Teuira was submitted to Labor on Sept. 22, 2005.

The Labor director denied the application based upon failure to submit a business establishment inspection. Marino Promotions did not correct the deficiency. The appeal was not filed until June 6, 2006.

Mii Tekdpua testified that he is the owner of Te Ivi Maori Dance Company. He said he employed Teuira on a part-time basis during the last year. Teuira admitted that he has worked for Tekdpua.

Hirshbein said this unauthorized employment is a violation of the law that provides "no nonresident worker shall perform labor or services within the Commonwealth except pursuant to an approved contract."

"Given the information presented, the hearing officer cannot make a finding that this was a 'sponsorship' application. It does, however, appear to be such," Hirshbein said.

Teuira and Marino Promotions timely appealed.

In an affidavit, Mii Tekopua, owner and vice president of Te Ivi Maori Dance Co., stated that Hirshbein's findings are wrong. Tekopua said that when Teuira no longer worked for Marino Promotions he was required to move out of the company's barracks.

"Because I knew Jacob (Teuira) and his abilities, I agreed to have him transfer to my company and to live with me and my family during the course of the processing of his application for transfer relief by CNMI Department of Labor," Tekopua said.

Tekopua said that upon reading Hirshbein's decision, he discovered that there was miscommunication between him and the officer.

"At the hearing he [Hirshbein] had asked if Jacob had worked for me and I responded that Jacob had worked a couple of times," he said. From that response alone, he said, Hirshbein determined that Teuira had violated the labor laws by being employed.

"The examiner did not ask anything about the circumstances of the work Jacob had done or whether or not Jacob was paid for the work," Tekopua said.

Tekopua pointed out that the dancer has never been employed by him or his company nor has he ever received any earnings from him or his company.

He said during the many months that Teuira was unemployed he danced with his company only twice, but without pay or promise of pay.

"He has danced all his life but had been unable to dance because of his employment restrictions. He just wanted to dance," Tekopua said.

In his order on the appeal, San Nicolas said the appeal should have been forwarded directly to the Secretary's office, but it was apparently misplaced at the hearing office.

San Nicolas said that when the appeal was filed it contained a request for a hearing on appeal and no supporting argument for the appeal was then submitted.

During the long delay in addressing this appeal no hearing was set, he said.

After the passage of many months an affidavit of a prospective employer [Tekopua] was filed in the case.

San Nicolas said that from a review of the record it appears that the original employer, Marino Promotions, was no longer functioning when the denial was issued by Processing.

The Secretary said the case was properly handled by Hirshbein but was decided within his (hearing officer) discretion and not on specific findings of wrongdoing.

Sablan returns $3K-plus in campaign donations

By AGNES E. DONATO
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REPORTER

A freshman lawmaker is returning over $3,000 of unused campaign contributions to her political supporters.

Rep. Tina Sablan said yesterday that she has cut checks for 11 people who donated to her first electoral bid.

Sablan received contributions amounting to $4,773, of which $3,760 was in cash. One of the smallest spenders in the last midterm election, Sablan spent $675 on her campaign.

"I am grateful for the donations, but I didn't need, or use all of it. But I thought the honest thing to do is to give the money back. It was not my money, and I wouldn't feel comfortable doing anything else with it," she said.

She added that the money was being returned in the proportion in which they were received. A donor who gave 20 percent of the total contributions will receive 20 percent of the excess funds.

Sablan revealed that the largest cash contribution she received amounted to $1,500. Most other donations ranged from $100 to $200.

Political contributions may only be used for campaign and election purposes. Candidates are prohibited from using campaign donations for personal benefit.

However, candidates may retain excess campaign funds in a designated bank account for use in future elections or campaigns.

Another option is to use the funds for post-election meetings, rallies, or parties, but this requires the filing of an amended campaign statement of account with the Commonwealth Election Commission to report the expenses incurred.

Still another option is to donate the money to the central government or a nonprofit organization.

Man gets prison time for trafficking 'ice'

The federal court ordered a man to spend two years and nine months in prison yesterday for trafficking crystal methamphetamine or "ice."

U.S. District Court for the NMI chief judge Alex R. Munson sentenced Zhi Yun Qiu to 33 months in prison for distribution of controlled substance.

Munson ordered the 37-year-old Qiu to pay a $100 special assessment fee and required him to perform 200 hours of community service.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Craig Moore and defense attorney Robert Torres both recommended 33 months imprisonment.

Qiu was charged with two counts of distribution of controlled substance for allegedly selling "ice" on Nov. 15, 2006 and March 28, 2008.

The defendant entered a plea agreement with the U.S. government. He pleaded guilty to one count. The remaining charge was dismissed pursuant to the agreement.

According to court papers, the defendant distributed 4.38 grams of "ice" on Nov. 15, 2006. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

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AG's help sought on teacher rep

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
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REPORTER

Former teacher representative Ambrose Bennett has filed a complaint against Gov. Benigno Fitial with the Attorney General's Office, citing "the failure of the governor to appoint an acting teacher representative to the CNMI State Board of Education."

Bennett, who has strongly opposed ACT's nomination of school administrator Betty Miller to the post, stressed with the AGO that the governor has a fiduciary duty under the Constitution to appoint a Teacher Representative to the Board of Education.

"However, the governor has not fulfilled his appointment requirement," said Bennett in his letter to Attorney General Matthew Gregory.

"Even though there are two existing AG opinions that clearly state the Board has nothing to do with the selection and appointment of the Teacher Rep, Gov. Benigno Fitial is still asking the BOE to recommend a teacher to be appointed," Bennett stated.

He accused the governor of "attempting to avoid his own fiduciary duty to make a selection and appoint in the absence of teachers fulfilling their obligation to the Constitution."

"No previous governor avoided their responsibility and neither should the present governor… His refusal to appoint is a clear and blatant violation of his fiduciary duty to uphold and fulfill the CNMI Constitution," said Bennett.

He reiterated that his re-appointment in an acting capacity to the teacher rep post is "the best choice" for the governor "under the present conditions as I was duly elected by teachers."

"The status of the ACT (Association of Commonwealth Teachers) administrator that wants to run for the teacher rep post is being reviewed by the court and there is a very high probability that she will be disqualified as an administrator and she has never received a vote of confidence from teachers to be the teacher rep," Bennett said.

In three separate occasions, ACT president Miller has been voted unanimously by ACT members to be a candidate for the post. ACT members consist of parents, administrators, and teachers as members.

Bennett, however, downplayed this, saying that majority of the teacher workforce "is tired of the controversy created by ACT."

"Teachers no longer want to be involved with an ACT election which is why no teacher wanted to run for the post and its all the more reason the Governor should intercede on behalf of teachers who are voted citizens and deserve the right of representation guaranteed to them in the CNMI Constitution without delay," Bennett said.

He added that as a voting citizen of the CNMI, it is his right to ask the Office of the Attorney General for a temporary resolution to "the constitutional requirement that is being ignored by the governor."

Investor files $.8M suit vs owners of 2 restaurants

An investor has filed a $.8 million lawsuit against the owners of two Garapan restaurants over their management contract and loan dispute.

In Taek Hwang sued Woo Young Lee and Eastern Hope Corp. for fraud, breach of management contract, breach of two loans, and breach of extended management contract.

Lee is president of Eastern Hope that owns Keeraku Restaurant and Rakuen Restaurant.

Hwang, through counsel Rexford C. Kosack, asked the Superior Court to order Eastern Hope and Lee jointly liable to pay $480,000 in general damages.

In addition, the plaintiff asked the court to order Eastern Hope to pay $250,000 in damages and Lee for $74,750 in damages.

According to Kosack, Hwang was induced to enter into a management contract with Eastern Hope for a three-year term at the rate of $55,000 per month.

Kosack said Lee claimed that Eastern Hope enjoyed $55,000 an average monthly profit for the two restaurants. But this was at least $20,000 per month more than Eastern Hope actually made, he said.

Kosack said his client also sued for the return of his $250,000 security deposit with Eastern Corp. and for repayment of $74,750 that he loaned to Lee.

The lawyer stated in the complaint that in 2002 and part of 2003, Eastern Hope operated the two adjoining Keeraku Restaurant and Rakuen Restaurant.

Lee owned 95 percent of the shares of Eastern Hope in 2003 and was president of the corporation. He has continued as president and is a 95 percent shareholder to this day, according to Kosack.

Kosack said that, in June 2003, Lee was short of cash and needed to raise funds to pay off debts he owed in Korea.

Lee decided to cause Eastern Hope to offer the opportunity of managing its two restaurants as a means of raising funds for himself.

Lee approached Hwang in June of 2003 and proposed that Hwang enter into a management contract with Eastern Hope that would permit him to operate the two restaurants.

Kosack said Lee represented to Hwang that during 2002 and 2003, Eastern Hope had an average net profit of $55,000 per month in operating the two restaurants.

"The statement, however, was not true. The combined net profit had been less," Kosack said.

Relying on this representation, Hwang entered into a management contract with Eastern Hope that required him to pay a monthly fee of $55,000 per month.

Hwang determined that if Eastern Hope's average profit was $55,000 per month, he could increase the profit because he operated a tourism company and would be able to increase the number of customers for the restaurants by including meals at the restaurants in his tour packages.

The management contract was for a three-year term, commencing on Oct. 1, 2003 and terminating on Sept. 30, 2006. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

STUDY

From Page 1

White House spokesman Scott Stanzel did not comment on the merits of the study Tuesday night but reiterated the administration's position that the world community viewed Iraq's leader, Saddam Hussein, as a threat.

"The actions taken in 2003 were based on the collective judgment of intelligence agencies around the world," Stanzel said.

The study counted 935 false statements in the two-year period. It found that in speeches, briefings, interviews and other venues, Bush and administration officials stated unequivocally on at least 532 occasions that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction or was trying to produce or obtain them or had links to al-Qaida or both.

"It is now beyond dispute that Iraq did not possess any weapons of mass destruction or have meaningful ties to al-Qaida," according to Charles Lewis and Mark Reading-Smith of the Fund for Independence in Journalism staff members, writing an overview of the study. "In short, the Bush administration led the nation to war on the basis of erroneous information that it methodically propagated and that culminated in military action against Iraq on March 19, 2003."

Named in the study along with Bush were top officials of the administration during the period studied: Vice President Dick Cheney, national security adviser Condoleezza Rice, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz and White House press secretaries Ari Fleischer and Scott McClellan.

Bush led with 259 false statements, 231 about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and 28 about Iraq's links to al-Qaida, the study found. That was second only to Powell's 244 false statements about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and 10 about Iraq and al-Qaida.

The center said the study was based on a database created with public statements over the two years beginning on Sept. 11, 2001, and information from more than 25 government reports, books, articles, speeches and interviews.

STORES

From Page 2

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- TYLENOL® Concentrated Infants' Drops Plus Cold & Cough

SEARCH

From Page 1

hard in search of the missing Renguul, a 48-year-old Palau native.

"Since Sunday evening, the teams have been battling strong ocean currents and large waves during their search," Ogumoro said.

"The department extends its deepest condolences to the family and friends of Mr. Skaruno Renguul," she said.

Ogumoro said the initial report identified the victim's first name as Skaiuno.

Renggul is feared dead after a big wave swept him and his companion from the cliff line at Marine Beach in Kagman Sunday night.

Renguul and Frank K. Leon Guerrero were reportedly crab hunting near the cliff line along the northern portion of Marine Beach at 8:30pm when a large wave swept them out to sea.

Leon Guerrero managed to swim back toward the cliff line. He suffered minor abrasions and scratches to the lower back and right elbow as well as fluid in the lungs.

BILL

From Page 1

percent of their total yearly earnings.

Under the bill, the tax rate would increase by one percentage point for every $10,000 earned above $60,000. For instance, those making between $60,001 and $70,000 will be taxed 10 percent. Those making between $70,001 and $80,000 will be taxed 11 percent. Anything over $100,000 will be taxed 14 percent.

Lawmakers have been toying with the tax hike proposal for almost a year now. In May 2007, a legislative hearing was held to solicit comments on the plan. But the House did not act on the bill until late December 2007, leaving the Senate little time to act on it. The term of the 15th Legislature expired on Jan. 13, 2007.

Finance Secretary Eloy Inos, who testified at a May 2007 legislative hearing, had said the tax hike proposal would have minimal impact on government revenue. Very few people earn over $60,000 in the Commonwealth.

He suggested that the Legislature look at laws on nonrefundable tax credits, and consider reducing the incentives given to taxpayers.

"You cannot tax here and give credit on the other side. If we address that, we might see some benefit from this [tax increase]. Otherwise, this could be revenue neutral," he said. ***(Agnes E. Donato)***

SO FAR

From Page 1

The high load factors of the twice-a-week charter flights were disclosed by Tinian Dynasty Hotel and Casino manager Tom Liu and Century Tours operations manager Nomi in separate interviews with the *Saipan Tribune*.

Tinian Dynasty's Tinian Dynasty International Travel and Century Tours, an affiliate of this newspaper, jointly charter the Shanghai-Saipan flights and share 130 seats in each flight.

"Shanghai flights are enjoying quite high loading factors—100 percent—since resuming their service due to strong market demand and the strong renminbi versus the U.S. dollar. This trend will continue through Chinese New Year until end of February and we hope that it will continue into the low season of March-June and beyond," said Liu in an e-mail to the *Saipan Tribune* Tuesday.

Ma echoed Liu's statement in an interview yesterday and said Century Tours expects the high load factor to continue until Feb. 22.

She added that apart from the good exchange rate of the Chinese currency vis-à-vis the U.S. dollar—RMB7.1 to $1 today compared to RMB8.3 to $1 a year ago—Saipan has also become an attractive destination because the promotional activities the Marianas Visitors Authority and the two companies initiated a couple of years ago are finally kicking in.

Ma said that back in 2004, almost nobody knew about the CNMI, but four years later the destination is now quite known in Shanghai, thanks largely the FAM tours that MVA sponsored for Chinese media.

She said another factor that has enticed people from Shanghai to fly to Saipan is that, unlike destinations in Southeast Asia, the island is not too crowded and they don't have to travel too long to get here, which gives them more vacation time, allowing them to really relax.

The current winter season in China has also "forced" not a few to retreat to the tropics like Saipan.

Ma said that aside from the garden variety sightseeing tours, Century Tours also offers optional tours like a trip to Managaha Island, diving, golfing, and jungle excursions.

Liu is sure that the additional passengers brought in by China Eastern have contributed toward the economic growth of the CNMI. He said visitors from the Chinese city are always known as "spenders."

"We certainly hope that the market demand will continue to be strong to support Shanghai charter flights," he added.

China Eastern uses A300 airplane with a seating capacity of 262 seats for their Shanghai-Saipan flights. The service resumed last Jan. 11.

Century Tours and Tinian Dynasty International Travel were able to re-negotiate successfully with China Eastern Airlines to resume the twice-weekly flights operating every Friday and Monday from Shanghai to Saipan.

Flights depart from Pudong Airport at 20:00 and arrive on Saipan at 02:15 the following morning. Return flights to Shanghai will depart Saipan at 04:00 and arrive in Shanghai at 05:00 every Saturday and Tuesday.

China Eastern made its last charter flight from Shanghai to Saipan in Aug. 24, 2007. It was suspended after the carrier asked Tinian Dynasty and Century Tours for a new charter fee hike.

The charter flight originally was launched in January 2004 and became regular in July 2004.

Noted author's love affair with Saipan endures

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
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REPORTER

Noted writer P.F. (Fred) Kluge first set foot on Saipan in 1967. Then a fresh-faced 25-year-old U.S. Peace Corps volunteer, he landed on the island to edit a magazine called the *Micronesian Reporter* on Capital Hill.

"I traveled freely and interviewed people. I suppose you can say that I got hooked. And I swore, when I left, that I would always come back," he said.

Forty-one years later, Kluge celebrates his 66th birthday today with another visit to the scene of his many works, this time to talk about "Writing on Saipan, writing about Saipan."

"Once you get into a conversation with a place like this, you don't walk away. You find yourself writing an article or two, then a book or two but you always return to find out what is going on," said Kluge.

This is not the first time, though, that his wanderlust brought him to Saipan. He's been to the Commonwealth several times, the last one in 2004 during the 60th anniversary of the Battles of Tinian and Saipan.

He said many things make him come back: The camaraderie, the scenery, and the weather are just a few. At the same time, when his wife was still working in the Philippines, he would always take the route going through Saipan.

"When I wasn't here I find myself thinking about the place so a part of me always stayed here," said Kluge.

He said he could be sitting in his office in New York when he used to write for the *Wall Street Journal* and *Life Magazine*, and he would get a faraway look in his eyes, his mind drifting to what is going on in this speck of rocks in the middle of the Pacific.

"I am often writing about the place whenever I could," said Kluge.

His first novel, *The Day That I Die*, was set on Saipan. He is now working on a new fiction story that is also set on Saipan.

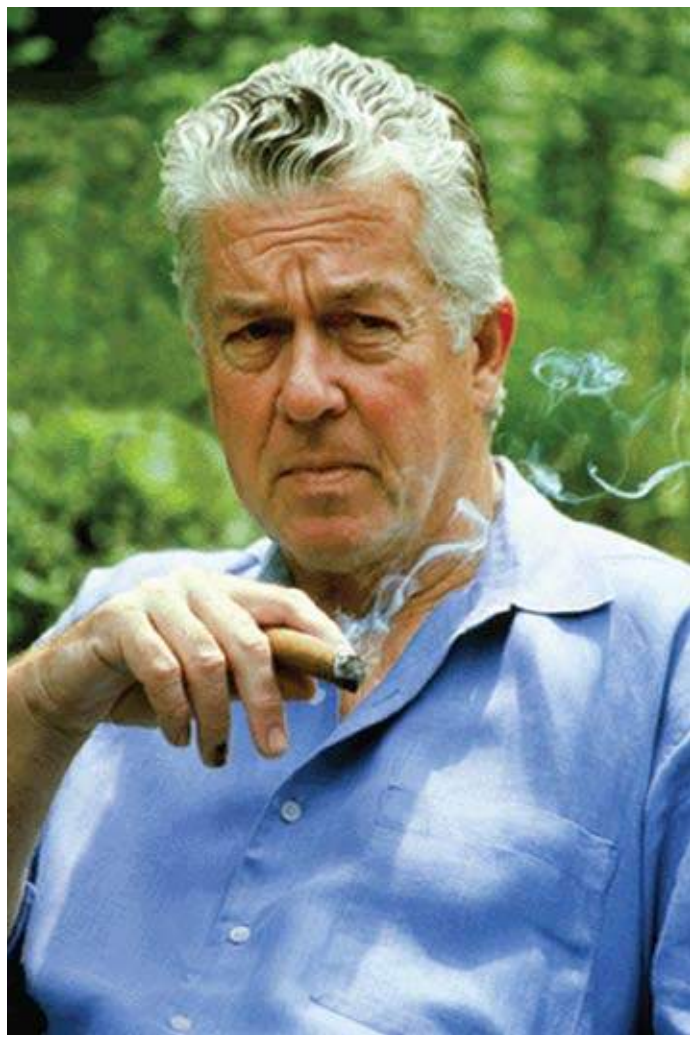
One question that keeps bugging Kluge is what would become of Saipan in its relationship to the world and its desire for modern life and its connection to the U.S. In particular, he wonders: "What becomes of a small island in the 20th century when they are not isolated anymore? What becomes of the islands when they join the world? When they stop being islands, when they stop being insular? What do you keep? What do you lose? What do you buy? What does it cost? And what do you say when its not for sale?"

"A calm peaceful tropical island would bore me to death in a week. I like an island where things are happening, where there's turbulence, conflict, discussion—and Saipan has never lacked that," he said.

Kluge is holding a lecture tomorrow, Jan. 25, at 6:30pm at the Visitors' Center Theater of the American Memorial Park. Admission is free.

There, he will talk about his experience as a writer dealing with Saipan, appropriately titled "Writing on Saipan, writing about Saipan."

With a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, Kluge is writer-in-residence at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio, where he offers courses in modern literature and fiction writing. Read more about Dr. Kluge at http://pfkluge.com.



Noted writer P.F. Kluge describes himself in his website as a "novelist, journalist, professor: a trifecta, a hat trick, a trinity. All about words." This picture of him is taken from his website.

Local shrimp grower exports to Indonesia

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Local shrimp grower Saipan SyAqua Aquaculture exported 125 pairs of broodstocks—or parent shrimps—to one of the biggest shrimp hatcheries in Indonesia last December.

In an interview yesterday, Saipan SyAqua operations manager Rommel G. Catalma said the China Town shrimp farm exported 250 pieces (125 male and 125 female) of 10-month-old broodstocks to the Southeast Asian country last Dec. 27.

He said Saipan SyAqua sold the Pacific white shrimp (*Penaeus Vannamei*) broodstock at $25 per piece, exclusive of freight and packaging cost, which the buyer had to pay.

That single transaction easily netted the company $6,250.

Catalma said the parent shrimps exported to Indonesia weighed about 30 grams to 45 grams per piece and the Cargo Express service that the live freight were in took the Saipan-Narita-Singapore-Indonesia route.

Currently, Saipan SyAqua is the only shrimp farm outside of Hawaii that exports Pacific white shrimp broodstock. This is because under the law, only U.S. territories are allowed to export the broodstock of that particular specie since it was developed by Hawaii's Oceanic Institute.

Catalma added that aside from the restriction, there are also stringent requirements to be able to export parent shrimp to other countries. First, a farm or facility needs a two-year disease free certification from the University of Arizona and then pass the inspection of the department of fisheries of the particular country the company is exporting to.

He said Saipan SyAqua passed the quarterly reviews from the University of Arizona and was given the green light to export by Thailand and Indonesia.

At any given time, Saipan SyAqua has 500,000 shrimps at its facility in China Town. Production, meanwhile, is around 3,000 lbs a month and increasing. Catalma said they hope to double that production at the end of the year.

Catalma in an earlier interview said their shrimp farm has undergone major changes in terms of structures and procedures. He said their direction is to adopt Best Aquaculture Practices, or BAP, as their standard.

Aside from culturing broodstocks for export to shrimp-producing countries, Saipan Aquaculture also grows shrimps for meat which they sell to hotels and restaurants.

Last year, the company also began selling their shrimp at Sabalu Market, which has been such a huge success that their supplies usually run out before 12noon.

Catalma said Saipan SyAqua employs two aquaculturists, a chemist, a sales and delivery person, and two aquaculture aides. The company also has the support of the entire sales force of Saipan Ice and Water Company and all of its support services for its electrical and mechanical needs.

MARK RABAGO

Saipan SyAqua Aquaculture operations manager Rommel G. Catalma shows a Pacific white shrimp broodstock at the company's facility in China Town.

Island Snapshots

FAMILY AFFAIR

Sen. Jude U. Hofschneider is joined by his family during the inauguration of the 16th Legislature, held Jan. 14, 2008, on Capital Hill. From left, sister-in law Louise DLG Hofschneider; daughter Ashley; Sen. Hofschneider; youngest daughter Alexis; wife Liz; and the senator's older sister, Corrine H. Santos.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Sen. Jude U. Hofschneider is flanked by his siblings in his office after the inauguration of the 16th Legislature, held Jan. 14, 2008, on Capital Hill. From left, Herman, Julian, Sen. Hofschneider, Corrine, and Alice.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

FMI-MOBIL CLEANUP

Friends of the Mariana Islands volunteers clean up the drainage along Tun Joaquin Doi Road near Fina Sisu. Last Saturday was the fifth weekend that these volunteers have been cleaning up the site, using the supplies and other support provided by a Mobil Oil Mariana Islands Inc. donation.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

CHILD SEAT CHECK

Children engage in a coloring activity while waiting for their cars to be inspected by certified child passenger safety technicians during the Department of Public Safety's Buckle Up Children Consulting Child Safety Seat on the parking lot of Price Costco Saturday morning. The technicians also educated parents and caregivers about proper installation and use of child safety seats and booster seats during the free inspection.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

LIGHT MOMENT

Rep. Victor B. Hocog, Rep. Edward T. Salas and Rep. Ramon A. Tebuteb share a light moment during the 16th House of Representatives first session Tuesday.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

IN APPRECIATION

The Marianas Visitors Authority presents a certificate of appreciation to Hidenori Hayashi and Wataru Sato who supported the Saipan Marathon that took place this past weekend. Both Hayashi and Sato were actively involved in securing the sponsorships from Oakley Japan, Excite Japan and Body+ for the Saipan Marathon. Pictured from left to right are Takaku Wataru, MVA Japan; Hidenori Hayashi, AnH; Yoichi Matsumura, MVA board member; Wataru Sato, C3; and Hiroko Tenorio of MVA.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

MARINE BEACH SEARCH

Family members and friends of Skaiuno M. Renguul patiently wait on the shore while rescue teams from the Department of Public Safety's Boating Safety Section, Emergency Management Office, and the Commonwealth Ports Authority continue the sea and land search at Marine Beach in Kagman. Renguul has been missing since Sunday after being swept out to sea by a large wave while crab hunting with a friend.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Korean talk show films episode on Saipan

Kim Mi Hwa's U will be filming on Saipan starting today, Jan. 24, until Jan. 30.

Mi-Hwa Kim, the hostess of the show, is a well known celebrity who works for both Korean TV and radio. She started her career as a comedy actress and now has the nickname of "Korea's Oprah Winfrey." She is a goodwill ambassador of UNICEF, Seoul Metropolitan City, and Green Korea (environmental NGO). She has won several best comedy actress and best TV show hostess awards from national TVs and radios.

The show, Kim Mi Hwa's U, has an average rating of 4 percent nationwide which equated to approximately 1.96 million viewers. Since the show is aired at 1pm from Monday to Thursday, the main audience is housewives in 40s and 50s, which is 80 percent of the total audience. The show filmed on Saipan will be aired on the Lunar New Year holiday and the rating is expected to surpass 5 percent or approximately 2.45 million viewers.

On Saipan, the show's main focus will be the life stories of the Korean residents on the islands of Saipan and Tinian. They will also be hosting a food fair to raise funds for construction of a new Korean language school as well as filming the tourist attractions such as the Banzai Cliff and Mañagaha Island.

The Marianas Visitors Authority acknowledged Saipan World Resort, Aqua Resort Club, Korean Association of Saipan, Korean Women's Association of Saipan and the Korean Tour Association of Saipan for their support in this endeavor. They are pooling resources together to host 20 persons, including TV celebrities, the film crew and food specialists. The projected exposure value of this promotion is US$125,000.

"We look forward to hosting Ms. Mi-Hwa Kim and the other celebrities and film crew from Korea," said MVA managing director Perry Tenorio. "Our continued exposure in Korea continues to prove to be a smart investment as our Korean arrivals have risen by double digit numbers for the past few months."

Newly elected officers of the NMC Alumni Association pose for a photo with NMC President Dr. Carmen Fernandez. From left, Jack Kiyoshi, Jocelyn Tagabuel, Christopher Cabrera, Dr. Fernandez, and Jesse Torres.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

NMC Alumni Association members elect 4 officers

In a move that brings them closer to their aim of becoming more active at their alma mater and in the community, graduates of the Northern Marianas College recently elected the officers of the newly formed NMC Alumni Association. At its first general meeting, alumni members elected Jesse Torres as president, Christopher Cabrera as vice president, Jack Kiyoshi as secretary, and Jocelyn Tagabuel as treasurer.

"The composition of the elected officers represents a rich diversity of backgrounds and experience," said NMC president Dr. Carmen Fernandez. "We look forward to working closely with them to advance the interests of our graduates, the college, and the CNMI."

Association president Torres graduated from NMC in 1999 with an associate's degree in business management. After graduating from NMC, he earned a bachelor's degree from Portland State University in 2002 and a master's in business administration from California State University. He currently works as the Saipan manager for Staywell Marianas.

After graduating from NMC in 2001 with an associate's degree in liberal arts, vice president Cabrera earned a bachelor's degree in 2004 from Grand Canyon University in Arizona. He is currently employed as a guidance counselor at Marianas High School.

Secretary Kiyoshi graduated from NMC in 2000 with an associate's degree with a major in criminal justice and liberal arts. He currently works as a personnel specialist at NMC.

Treasurer Tagabuel earned her associate's degree in business administration from NMC in 2004. She currently works in the accounts payable section of the Public School System.

The officers are now working to formalize the NMC Alumni Association by preparing the requisite paperwork to form a nonprofit organization.

Graduates of NMC or those who have earned at least 24 academic credits are encouraged to register as members of the Alumni Association. For more information contact Kiyoshi at 234-5498 extension 1022, or email jack@nmcnet.edu. ***(NMC)***

Pacific Island Movers has a new commercial relocation manager

GUAM—Pacific Island Movers, a leader in household goods relocations, announced Tuesday that Marisol Wild has been appointed Commercial Relocation Manager.

Her primary responsibility in this new role will be to develop new business prospects and partnerships to generate business opportunities. This appointment supports Pacific Island's ongoing commitment to aligning its full portfolio of services to best serve its customers.

Wild has over 15 years of domestic and international relocation experience. She is a member in a number of industry trade associations and organizations, including RIM (Registered International Mover).

"Marisol's knowledge of the relocation industry, demonstrated leadership skills and accomplishments are exemplary. Her experience and insights will be of great benefit to Pacific Island in her new position," said Jim Coleman, president.

Pacific Island Movers is a full service worldwide moving and storage company that is dedicated to serving the needs of corporations, governments, and individuals. For more information about Pacific Island Movers visit www.pacificislandmovers.com or call 1-671-646-5865. ***(PR)***

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Youth group raises funds for Guam trip

Members of the Kenekenz Youth Group participated in Shell's Suds for Funds car wash event as part of efforts to raise money for their Guam outreach program. The Suds for Funds was held on Jan. 19 at Shell's Puerto Rico service station.

Elsie Ramon, adviser for United Church Youth Group of which Kenekenz is a member, said that overall, the turnout was good with people coming from the other end of the island to donate and show support. Most of the youth group's members were from the southern part of Saipan, Ramon said.

"We are very happy and grateful to Shell, Coca-Cola Beverage Micronesia and Glimpses for putting the event together. It was very well organized," Ramon said.

She said the car wash event "will help raise the funds" for the Guam trip which has been planned for June.

"They are going to Guam in June to do outreach for the other young people there," Ramon said.

She said the group was able to raise $62. "We did not do well with the pre-selling of the coupons. But people were still donating even though they didn't bring their car to the event," Ramon said.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Kenekenz Youth Group pose for the camera during a break in Shell's Suds for Funds car wash event held at Shell's Puerto Rico service station on Jan. 19 from 10am to 2pm.

The Shell Suds for Funds car wash event is a monthly fundraiser organized by Shell Marianas, Coca-Cola Beverage Co. (Micronesia) Inc., and Glimpses Advertising for the benefit of nonprofit organizations. Glimpses coordinates and documents the event for media purposes.

Other groups that have participated in the event include the St. Paul's Episcopal Mission, a support group for nonresident workers on Saipan; the Southern Sonics basketball team, and the Inatuas Cultural Dance Group. ***(Glimpses)***

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Trails and Parks meeting set

There will be a Trails & Parks meeting on Feb. 7 at 2pm at the Resource Conservation & Development office. The RC&D office is on Beach Road on the first floor of the D.Y. Building with the coral reef banner out front. If it gets too large, the meeting will move next door to the NRCS office conference room.

"I hope to see you there, since anything, we do to improve our environment and ecotourism on this island will benefit everyone," said Ken Kramer, Marianas RC&D coordinator. ***(PR)***

CNMI Daycare Association meeting

All members and non-members of the CNMI Daycare Association will have a meeting with PSS and DCCA (Melvin Faisao) on Jan. 24, 2008, Thursday at 6pm, at Children's World Daycare Center, Koblerville. For further information call Mila at 483-2367, Lina Torres at 288-5162 and Masina Leuta at 888-3166. ***(PR)***

CNMI Association of families with disabilities

Please be advised to all members that there will be a meeting this coming Saturday, Jan. 26, 2008 at Green Meadow School in Chalan Kiya at 9am. For further information call Mila at 483-2367, Lisa at 483-8295, Cocoy at 235-0439 or Maribel at 323-6274. ***(PR)***

Missing family dog

Our family dog was found missing on Monday, Jan. 21, 2008, around 10:30am from our residence in Palasyo Court, Dandan.

Our dog is a 3-year-old male Rottweiler, black with brown paws. If you see our dog, please contact Rudy at 288-2575 or Jocelyn at 234-6866.

He has been a part of our family and we hold him dear to our hearts. Please help us find him. Thank you. ***(PR)***

Essay and logo contest deadlines are extended

The Hafa Adai-Tirow Spirit Committee is holding a logo contest for all island artists and an essay contest for students grades 7-12. The deadline of submission for both logo designs and essays is Jan. 31, 2008 by 4:30pm. Submissions must be delivered to the Marianas Visitors Authority main office located in San Jose.

The logo contest is open to all resident artists of the CNMI of any age. Logo designs must illustrate the theme "The Hafa Adai and Tirow Way!", must incorporate the theme text, must work well in black and white, and must work well when reduced to 2.5 inches. Artists may submit as many logo designs as they wish. All submissions must include the name, telephone number and address of the artist. Logo designs must be submitted to the front office of the Marianas Visitors Authority, San Jose, Beach Road.

The essay contest is open to all CNMI students grades 7-12. Essays must address the question, "What can I do to show 'The Hafa Adai and Tirow Way!'" Essays must be between 400-500 words, be the original work of the student, and be typewritten on plain white paper or legibly handwritten on white lined paper. All submissions must include the name of the student, school, grade,, address and phone number.

Complete logo contest and essay contest guidelines are available at the Marianas Visitors Authority office, the NMI Museum Office, or you may contact Robert Hunter at telephone 664-2160/4 if you would like the guidelines faxed or e-mailed to you. ***(PR)***

NMC application ongoing

The Northern Marianas College has extended its application deadline to Jan. 25, 2008. If you are interested in furthering your education, call NMC Admissions and Records Office for assistance. The FAFSA Application Federal Pell grant is also still ongoing. The deadline is Feb. 1.

For more Information, call the Northern Marianas College at 234-5498. Office of Admissions and Records: 1524, 1528, 1539, 1523, Fax# 235-4967; Financial Aid Office: 1527, 1525, 1526, Fax# 235-4967; Student Center: 1251, 1252, 1253 ***(PR)***

Free lecture by noted writer

The NMI Council for the Humanities is inviting the public to attend a lecture by noted author PF (Fred) Kluge, titled "Writing on Saipan: Writing About Saipan."

The lecture will be held tomorrow, Jan. 25, 2008, at 6:30pm, at the Visitors' Center Theater of the American Memorial Park. Admission is free.

Since coming to Saipan in 1969 as a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer, PF (Fred) Kluge has made Saipan a major theme in many of his nine books and in numerous magazine articles. His first novel, *The Day That I Die*, was set on Saipan. His nonfiction book, *The Edge of Paradise*, covered Saipan.

With a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, Kluge is writer-in-residence at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio, where he offers courses in modern literature and fiction writing. Read more about Dr. Kluge at http://pfkluge.com/. ***(PR)***

Registration starts for 2nd Guam Industry Forum

The second Guam Industry Forum has launched a new web site and registration portal to kick off its registration period. The Forum is sponsored by the Joint Guam Program Office, JGPO, and the Naval Facilities Engineering Command, NAVFAC.

The Forum will provide updates on the planning and acquisition strategy efforts following the first Industry Forum held on Guam in August 2007. Anticipated topics for the March 6-8, 2008 forum include: Master planning and environmental impact statement updates; acquisition strategy and program management approaches; special purpose entities status for housing and utilities; funding profiles & relationships - government of Japan and U.S.; government of Guam issues and needs; future department of defense needs; federal involvement.

More information on the Guam Industry Forum II, the agenda, and registration forms are available on-line at www.guamindustryforum.com. Registration will close on Feb. 25, 2008. ***(PR)***

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

January 24, 2001

Hundreds marched against abortion

Religious leaders in the Commonwealth challenged the community Monday night to stand up and openly oppose any abortion-related practices on the island to protect the rights of women and the unborn. During the March for Life Rally, members of various religious groups and government agencies gathered in front of DFS Galleria and walked all the way to the American Memorial Park where a prayer rally was held.

Rota welcomes shooting resorts

Hundreds of Rota residents have penned their support to a petition calling for the revival of the Shooting Range bill that would pave the way for the establishment of international "shooting resorts" on the island. Copies of the 43-page thick petition enlisting the names of Rota residents were submitted by Rota Mayor Benjamin T. Manglona to Governor Pedro P. Tenorio, the Senate, the House, and the Rota Legislative Delegation in a last-ditch effort to convince local leaders of Rota's strong interest to embrace the investment opportunity.

CPA on target in Tinian airport construction

Construction of the new runway for the West Tinian International Airport has been ongoing and the Commonwealth Ports Authority is confident the project will be completed within 18 months as scheduled. Executive Director Carlos H. Salas, in an interview, even disclosed the possibility that the runway construction will be completed ahead of the published schedule, citing recent meetings with contractor Telesource, CNMI.

January 24, 2002

Japanese avoid US destinations

Japanese travelers are not likely to swarm tourist destinations in the mainland United States and its territories this year, according to a 2002 outlook report released by Japan Travel Bureau Corporation. However, Asian destinations are expected to see higher tourist traffic from Japan as Japanese travelers remain wary about their safety in the US and its territories due to the September 11 attacks, as well as due to economic reasons.

Contractor upbeat on landfill construction

Declaring that they are all set to start the construction of the Marpi landfill facility, a partner to the joint venture contractor who won the government contract said government agencies and those concerned in the project are bound by one goal-to have it done as soon as possible. This, as the clock ticks before the Puerto Rico dumpsite reaches maximum capacity.

Stateless children could be 'stateside' kids soon

Help may soon be in the way for the estimated 200 "stateless" children in the CNMI, after Rep. William S. Torres took up the matter with visiting Washington officials who had attended the Babauta-Benavente inauguration earlier this month. Torres said that, in a sidebar meeting with Washington dignitaries during the inaugural ball at the Diamond Hotel, he brought up the issue about these "stateless" residents and asked Washington's help in resolving the predicament faced by these people.

January 24, 2003

Manglona honored to be RP presidential awardee

Beaming with pride and honor, a teary-eyed Rota Mayor Benjamin T. Manglona formally accepted Wednesday night the Banaag presidential award conferred by the Philippine government for his enduring support to the welfare and interests of the Filipino community in the CNMI. Philippine Consul-General Julia C. Heidemann, on behalf of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, presented the award to Manglona during a reception dinner held in the Mayor's honor at the Aqua Resort Club.

Main intent of sin tax law touted

Amid left and right pitches to amend the debated sin tax law, House Rep. Gloria DLC. Cabrera said yesterday that she maintains her stand on the legislation, noting that her position is based on health statistics reflecting the adverse effects of tobacco and alcohol abuse. Cabrera was reacting to reported plans by some legislators to amend certain provisions in Public Law 13-38, particularly on the proposal to lower the excise taxes imposed on tobacco and alcohol products.

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Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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EDITORIAL

The reality of Roe

Thirty-five years ago, the Supreme Court, under the leadership of one Nixon appointee and in a decision written by another, asserted that abortion was protected by the right of privacy and guaranteed under the 14th Amendment. That decision, Roe vs. Wade, has inspired many protests and rallies in the years since, and will so again today.

The precedent set by Roe is more threatened now than ever. The appointments of Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr. and Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. have reduced the presumed support for Roe to a small majority on the court. Meanwhile, the four justices in the court's liberal wing are growing old and could conceivably be replaced by the next president (John Paul Stevens will turn 88 in April). Even without a majority on the court, abortion foes have been chipping away at Roe one law at a time, and they have made alarming headway, culminating in a high court decision last April that for the first time since 1973 upheld a ban on a procedure—controversial "partial-birth" abortions.

A return to the days when states were free to ban abortion would be disastrous and deadly. A recent review of U.S. abortion statistics backs up what pro-choice activists have long asserted: Those most likely to get an abortion tend to be those least able to afford to travel to another state to get one. According to the Guttmacher Institute, the abortion rate among women living below the federal poverty line is almost four times higher than that among more affluent women. Statewide bans would lead to back-alley procedures by desperate women, who would die needlessly because politicians shut down clean and safe clinics.

That appalling possibility should trouble all the justices, but particularly Roberts. For him to overturn Roe would be to contradict his stated devotion to precedent and to turn his back on his mentor, former Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist. In Dickerson vs. the United States, which challenged whether suspects must be read their Miranda rights for their statements to be admissible in court, Rehnquist wrote for the majority in 2000 that regardless of whether justices supported the original Miranda decision, it had become "part of our national culture" and therefore deserving of protection. Roe, in the same way, created a now well-established right that would cause severe upheaval if it were overturned.

Sadly, too many conservatives attack judicial activism, then practice it. That makes this year's elections all the more important: Every Democratic candidate supports Roe, while only one Republican, Rudolph W. Giuliani, agrees (and he hedges). Something to keep in mind during this election season.

(c) 2008, Los Angeles Times

In the Land of Ott

"Racism is simply an ugly form of collectivism, the mindset that views humans strictly as members of groups rather than individuals... We should understand that racism will endure until we stop thinking in terms of groups and begin thinking in terms of individual liberty." Congressman Ron Paul, April 18, 2007

By RIK and JANEL VILLEGAS

Rik is a business instructor at NMC and Janel is a partner with BizResults, LLC (www.bizresults.org). They can be contacted at rikv@bizresults.org.

Once upon a time, in the Province of Plenty, many clans lived peacefully together. Much of their time was spent hunting and gathering food, and in the evenings they would meet together to eat, laugh, and share freely with one another. They were a happy, industrious, and peaceful people. The Province was broken into many territories, and the land occupied by the Ott clan was like every other place until a traveler visited one day.

The visitor brought with him many wares that attracted the people of the Province of Plenty. His trunk of trinkets and bling were greatly desired and most of it was quickly traded by the time he reached the land of Ott, except for one thing—a seed. This was no ordinary seed, the traveler told Iddy, the chief of the Ott clan, for it held magical powers for those who cared for it. It would provide greater prosperity to the clan by offering shelter from the storms, fruit to eat, and sap that could be made into a fine drink.

Chief Iddy traded for the seed and caused that it should be planted and nourished. It grew quickly over the years until it was the largest tree in the entire province. Just as the traveler promised, it provided the clan with shelter from the storms, sweet, low-hanging fruit to eat, and wonderful drink made from its sap.

The other clans could see that the Ott clan was greatly blessed from the fruit and shelter of the tree, and they desired the same benefits. However, Chief Iddy decreed that only his people could own the seed of the tree.

Soon in the Province of Plenty, there arose inequity because the Ott clan refused to share freely with others. Many of the other clans began to look at the advantages they had over their neighbors and they too stopped sharing freely. This caused an even greater division in the land and the clans began to distinguish themselves from the other clans by how they looked, what they wore, and the things they possessed. Strict rules were established within each clan to maintain their separate identity, and they would fight with their former friends in order to get more land, trinkets, and bling.

Years passed and the people who once shared freely now would only trade with others who could best benefit them. Even the people within clans began to distinguish themselves from others by the amount of land they controlled and the things they owned. Classes were established and because the land of Ott was the most prosperous, the clan established themselves as the upper class, with Chief Iddy as their ruler.

The province was no longer one of plenty because those in the lower classes had less to trade, and some eventually lost their land. The Ott clan became even more prosperous because of their big tree and the seeds that could only be owned by their people. Those who lost their land were forced to labor for the Ott clan many hours each day to survive and get a taste of the fruit and drink of the Ott tree. The low-hanging fruit of the tree soon spoiled the Ott clan, for they refused to work with their hands—for that was considered the work of those in the lower classes.

The huge tree was both prized and despised in the land. Those who could have the seed to cultivate on their own land prized it for the bounteous blessings it offered their clan. However, those who could not have their own tree and enjoy its fruits despised it. People who labored became resentful that Chief Iddy of Ott would not share what was once freely shared with others.

Even though the Ott clan became more prosperous and established themselves as the upper class, they were not as happy, and the people in the Province of Plenty were no longer happy. They did not meet in the evenings any more to share what they had with others. Laughter was seldom heard. Peace and plenty was replaced with sorrow and poverty. Yes, there was much that changed from the old ways. Before the seed of the Ott tree was planted, there was fellowship and the people cared for each other, but now there was greater division and each clan only looked after their own best interests because of the "big Ott tree" in the land.

EDITORIAL POLICY The *Saipan Tribune* welcomes comments on any article, column, editorial, or topic that may be of interest to the public. Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, CIC Centre, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

A young actor who meant serious business

By HANK STUEVER
(C) 2008, THE WASHINGTON POST

A young movie star dies and the mind automatically cues up the clip reel and FFs through the footage, even before it occurs to you to simply turn on the television and just watch the actual, endless loop:

Here is Heath Ledger—fresh and hunky and unknown—singing "Can't Take My Eyes Off You" and dancing on the school stadium bleachers in a teen flick adaptation of Shakespeare ("10 Things I Hate About You," a reworking of "The Taming of the Shrew"). Here is Heath Ledger caressing that empty, soiled cowboy shirt kept by his dead lover in "Brokeback Mountain." And Heath Ledger as one of the Bob Dylans in "I'm Not There," in sunglasses and a dour expression, one of the Bob Dylans who was impossible to be around.

A sneak peek of Heath Ledger from this summer's upcoming Batman movie as the Joker, fully unhinged, erasing in a few seconds any ownership Jack Nicholson may have claimed to that role. Working backward now, here is Heath Ledger in period pieces, wooing women or fighting in the Revolution. Heath Ledger in a knighthood fantasy, with swords. Heath Ledger as the unhappy prison guard in "Monster's Ball" who shoots himself in front of his father ...

Edit that, rewind, start again:

Video suddenly from someone's phone of the curious crowd that gathered in the early evening Tuesday, the gawkers and stalkers in all of us, at the SoHo apartment where Ledger was found dead at 28 by the housekeeper and the massage therapist. He was naked in a bed—fame's tragic tableau mort. Next we carry him to the gauzy and reverential place we reserve for such men: James Dean in a roadster on the highway, River Phoenix at a nightclub.

There can only be so many articles about a young actor's understatement, about his steeliness and cool. These always go with pictures of him in $400 jeans. Here you had a man who got a decent chance at everything a young actor could hope for, starting from Australian TV and leading to an Academy Award nomination for "Brokeback Mountain"—a part that, by conventional Hollywood wisdom, had just as much potential to kill a leading man's career.

Had he lived to old age, Ledger would have never stopped hearing "I wish I knew how to quit you" jokes, the line uttered by his co-star Jake Gyllenhaal in "Brokeback Mountain." MTV gave the two of them the "best kiss" prize at its movie awards show. What got lost in all that is how good the movie was, and how good Ledger was as Ennis Del Mar, the pent-up ranch hand with a broken heart. (Really it was a role about not talking, about the unsaid. Easier said than done.)

Some of Ledger's movies worked, and many of them did not, but all along, a viewer could sense that he went about the craft with almost too much seriousness, with *pain*.

In almost every interview he downplayed celebrityhood, tried to deny its meaning and place in his life, shrugged the usual serious-actor shrugs—often while lighting his cigarette, creating a mood of nonchalance. Just a couple of years ago he and his pretty girlfriend moved to the pretty part of Brooklyn and had a pretty baby girl. *People* (the magazine, and actual people) followed them everywhere. They broke up, and it seemed like a shame, though what sort of shame you can never quite say: Ours? Theirs?

Despite the initial huzzah and marketing by Ledger's publicists—the *Vanity Fair* cover eight years ago and the expert chiseling that goes along with that—the heartthrob thing never clicked for Ledger. He worked another angle, something that is sometimes called "smoldering" when writers are out of ways to describe it. It looked like it was a chore for him to be cute. "He's handsome, but not in a traditional sort of way," Shekhar Kapur, who directed Ledger in the 2002 drama "Four Feathers," said about the actor to *The Washington Post*. "He's a bit craggy, but he's very, very sexy."

Craggy sexy. That was it, and perhaps that was all of it. Craggy sexy is not a lot of smiles and fashion spreads. The result of craggy sexy is that a certain niche of fans winds up swooning, writing letters of adulatory praise to *Entertainment Weekly*, but not as many people who opt for the more mainstream definition of sexy. Those people like Brad Pitt.

In public, Ledger kept dirtying up, dressing down, adding tattoos, chain-smoking, letting his hair get long and greasy. (Message: I don't care about that kind of thing. Message: Only the art matters.)

But like all of them—all of these craggy sexy serious actors in search of a good part—he cleaned up good. The lasting photo is of him in a tuxedo, making his way down the red carpet in 2006 with his ex-girlfriend Michelle Williams. They'd met on the set of "Brokeback Mountain." They'd just had the baby a few months before, and named her Matilda. In the carpet moment, Williams is in curry yellow Vera Wang chiffon. The couple do their best to fulfill all the requirements of the carpet, talking optimistically and proudly about his nomination for Best Actor, and also talking about nothing, and looking great.

He didn't win. Hours later, at the *Vanity Fair* party at Morton's in Beverly Hills, he was drinking with friends. People stood near him and just watched him. It was Ledger, Williams and Jake Gyllenhaal. It was Gyllenhaal's talented sister, Maggie, and her fiance, the uncraggy, heavy-lidded Peter Sarsgaard.

We hovered around them and tried to overhear their conversation. Soon enough they all drew closer and shut everyone out with their body language. They formed an impenetrable circle of young Hollywood cool.

Letters to the Editor

Planning for the future of Tinian and the CNMI

I think I would not be wrong if I said all the people of Tinian are hoping that all the members of the new CNMI Legislature, both the House and the Senate, will join us this Friday, Jan. 25, for our local inaugural ceremonies. We are all anxious to hear Sen. Henry San Nicolas, son of Mayor Jose P. San Nicolas and chairman of the Tinian Legislative Delegation, outline his bold new Tinian Municipal Budget proposal, properly utilizing the Tinian casino revenues to improve the quality of primary health care services and educational needs for the people of the Commonwealth who reside on Tinian.

Tinian and Rota have approved casino gambling for their communities by popular initiative. The people of Saipan have clearly stated by popular initiative they are satisfied to let the industry develop on those two islands and restrict it from their own. With the full support of the new Legislature, the development of the Tinian casino gaming industry can provide an immediate infusion of new cash into the CNMI General Fund. To make it happen, however, the members of the new Legislature will need to give the industry its full support, ensuring that the CIP projects necessary for the full development of the airport are fast tracked.

No doubt, the members of the Legislature will enjoy listening to how Senator San Nicolas plans to complete these capital improvement projects by the middle of next year, the projected completion date for the instrument landing system. The full support of the new legislative leadership will be necessary to accomplish these tasks. If they give it, they will enjoy being present for some historic photographs as the first regular international flight arrives on Tinian. It will ring in a new era of economic dynamics in the CNMI and they will be able to share in the credit. One of them will probably be the next governor of the CNMI.

At the same time, the chairman of the Committee on Federal Relations might consider creating a sub-committee on military relations and assigning it the responsibility of providing a smooth transition as the U.S. Marine Corps prepares to arrive at North Field. It will be remembered that during the CNMI political status negotiations, F. Hayden Williams revealed that the U.S. Department of Defense had developed a plan to build a $300 million multi-service training base on Tinian. This was the key factor in the Covenant negotiations. Although the people of Tinian agreed to give up two-thirds of their island for base development and the Covenant did materialize, the base did not. President Nixon pulled out of Vietnam in 1972 before the proposed base became a reality.

Now, 35 years later, the changing international order in Asia has caused President Bush to pull the 3rd Marine Division out of Okinawa and move it to the Marianas. Although the bulk of the division will go to Guam, at least a training battalion will be stationed at North Field, finally bringing the Covenant negotiations full circle. Although not what was envisioned in 1971, the military commitment to a base on Tinian will be fulfilled. As with the development of all new bases, it will proceed in phases. Nevertheless, a full-fledged military base will be constructed at North Field, with a fence and guards.

Although the arrival of a Marine battalion on Tinian will present problems, as change always does, the move will be of great benefit to the Commonwealth, if the CNMI can put forward a team of professional liaison officers who can begin meeting regularly with military counterparts—on Tinian—to insure that the problems are minimized and the benefits to the CNMI community are maximized. This is not a "tomorrow" thing. The environmental impact study is underway now. As soon as it is completed and accepted, construction will begin.

The original offer from the United States included "refurbishing Tinian Harbor." This original promise needs to be re-confirmed, as it is the key to the long term development of Tinian, along with the full development of the Tinian West Field airport, of course. Questions must be answered, ahead of time. Will there be joint use agreements on the harbor and West Field? Will the military also refurbish Broadway and 8th Avenue, the key avenues from the harbor to North Field? Will there be a "power-sharing agreement," as there was/is on Guam? Or will the Navy decide to build its own power plant? Will the new Tinian Utilities Corp. be in place, ready to deal with the islandwide power system locally? Who will patrol the "no man's land" between civilian San Jose Village and North Field—military police or Tinian police? Who will be responsible for responding to an accident or a fire on military property outside the base? Will there be MPs patrolling San Jose Village at night? What procedures will locals and tourists need to follow to visit the bomb pits or Unai Chulu? How many local jobs will be created on base?

Point is, the CNMI government, both administrative as well as legislative, should be developing a direct working relationship with the federal government—for airport construction, harbor reconstruction, and military relations—and setting their own guidelines for transition and maintenance of the agreement. Of course, the Tinian leadership should be at the forefront, but the responsibility cannot be left on their shoulders alone. They do not have sufficient professional staff. This must be a CNMI-wide program.

Again, I hope that all members of the new Legislature will be present on Tinian for our local inaugural ceremonies and begin working together toward a new economic future for the CNMI.

Don Farrell
Marpo Heights, Tinian

Thank you for the clarification

I thank Mr. Jim Benedetto for coming up with a letter clarifying the confusion created by Ms. Cinta Kaipat. As a foreign worker who is keenly studying the pros and cons of the impending federalization, I knew something was erroneous about her claims that every foreign worker is going to be deported within five years after passing of the bill. I'm sure Ms. Kaipat has read the federalization bill but I'm not sure if she understood what she read. If she did I'm sure her interpretation would be accurate. I would imagine that Ms. Kaipat and her group had exerted an effort to meet with people like Jim Benedetto to get a clearer picture especially in addressing their concerns. I'm even surprised that some people like Ms. Kaipat and Sen. Maria Pangelinan are now openly stating the fact that Saipan needs foreign workers because that is not exactly how you, our host, is making us feel. If you mean what you're saying, then somehow there is a communication breakdown between you and us, foreign workers, that is creating a division. I read Sen. Maria Pangelinan's letter (Notes from the Hill) and I truly understand her points. I just wish that the Commonwealth would have a genuine concern for their foreign workers. One that is emanating from the heart and not just from need. After all, our Christian ways taught us to have love for each other. I can only think that the best way to resolve this animosity is for all parties to cool their heads, sit down and discuss issues. Teamwork = Success!

As for Ron, once again, he deserves an apology. But then again, I doubt if he will ever get one. This island needs to pray for humility and divine guidance as we await what the future holds for us.

Irene N. Tantiado
Chinatown, Garapan

Thank you

Thank you for putting us in the newspaper in the past. With your help we were able to get more people to visit our fundraisers and raise $625 to spay and neuter the cats and get them their shot. So far we were able to fix three cats: Tang, Beauty and Cutie. All the cats that have gotten fixed are healthy and fat. Since the cats have adopted us as their home we have been trying to get all of them fixed. We have two more cats to fix, Ginger and Krinky Tail. We will fix them with the money we have raised ($625). Once again the cats and the students in middle school thank you for helping.

Raina Haynes-Klaver, Jake Tiger Lee
Whispering Palms School

Sattelite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Partly cloudy with a slight chance of showers. Northeast winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with a slight chance of showers. Northeast winds 15 to 20 mph.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲81° ▼74°	▲79° ▼73°	▲79° ▼72°	▲80° ▼74°	▲80° ▼74°

Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Sunny	▲84	▼73
Palau	Partly Sunny	▲89	▼76
Yap	Partly Sunny	▲89	▼77
Chuuk	Mostly Sunny	▲89	▼90
Pohnpei	Partly Sunny	▲86	▼75
Kosrae	Cloudy	▲87	▼77
Majuro	Sunny	▲85	▼76

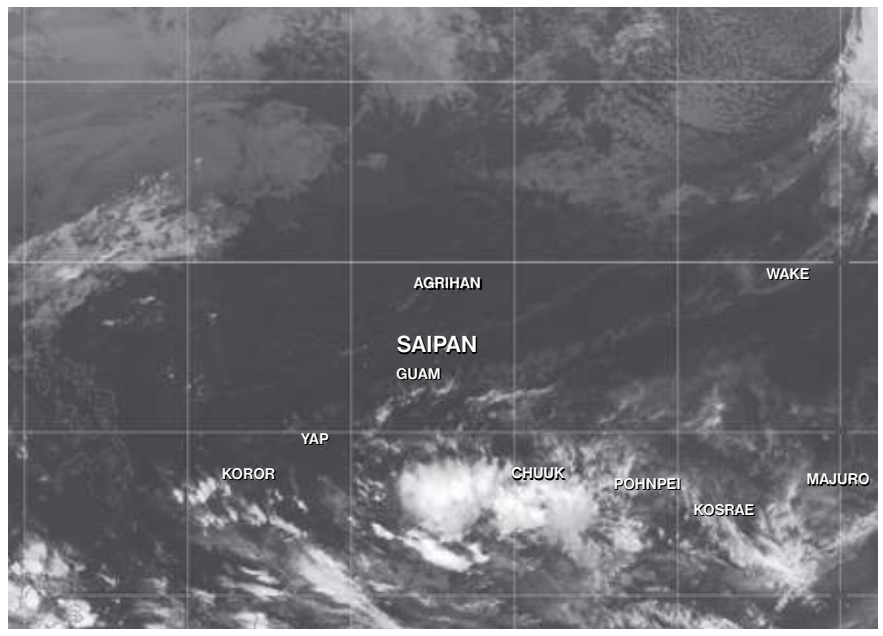
Around The Globe

Auckland	Sunny	▲73	▼65
Beijing	Mostly Sunny	▲32	▼17
Hong Kong	Mostly Cloudy	▲67	▼59
Honolulu	Partly Sunny	▲77	▼68
London	Rain	▲48	▼37
Los Angeles	Mostly Cloudy	▲62	▼46
Manila	Mostly Cloudy	▲83	▼73
Melbourne	Mostly Cloudy	▲78	▼61
Miami	Partly Sunny	▲78	▼57
New York	Flurries	▲32	▼18
Osaka	Mostly Cloudy	▲40	▼28
Paris	Showers	▲49	▼35
Pusan	Sunny	▲38	▼20
Rome	Sunny	▲58	▼40
Salem	Partly Sunny	▲41	▼31
San Francisco	Cloudy	▲53	▼42
Seoul	Sunny	▲25	▼10
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	▲42	▼41
Washington, DC	Flurries	▲36	▼17

Tides

Saipan Harbor		
02:52AM Today	Low Tide:	0.6 Feet
09:49AM Today	High Tide:	2.0 Feet
03:24PM Today	Low Tide:	1.0 Feet
08:18PM Today	High Tide:	2.0 Feet

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00AM, WEDNESDAY, JAN. 23, 2008
Western North Pacific between Equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A trough extends from 4N145E to EQ155E. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms are occurring near and south of Chuuk in the area bounded by 8N142E to 8N153E to 4N157E to 1N154E back to 8N142E. Low-level convergence is producing scattered showers east of Palau between 6N and 8N from 135E to 137E. Trade-wind convergence is producing scattered showers southeast of Kosrae between 1N and 4N from 167E to 171E. A trade-wind disturbance north of Kwajalein is generating scattered showers between 10N and 16N from 160E to 167E. A weak cold front stretches from 25N160E to 22N140E. Scattered light showers are found along and up to 150 miles north of the front.

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:47AM	6:11PM
Friday	6:47AM	6:11PM
Saturday	6:47AM	6:12PM
Sunday	6:47AM	6:12PM
Monday	6:47AM	6:13PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	07:49PM	07:56AM
Friday	08:42PM	08:36AM
Saturday	09:32PM	09:13AM
Sunday	10:20PM	09:49AM
Monday	11:08PM	10:23AM

GET YOUR PICTURES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS PUBLISHED—FOR FREE

The *Saipan Tribune* accepts for FREE publication the following:

PICTURES

- ISLAND SNAPSHOTS
  Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.
- BIRTHDAY GREETINGS
  A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
- BUSINESS
  Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
- SAMU'T SARI
  Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
- TRAVELOGUE
  Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- COMMUNITY BRIEFS
  Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN
  Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

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For pictures:

- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
- Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

For announcements:

- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and a phone number.
- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

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- Fax: (670) 235-3740
- Mail: PMB 34, P.O. Box 10001, Saipan, CNMI 96950
- Drop off: 2nd Floor, CIC Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan
  To check if contribution are received, call (670) 235-6397, 235-2440, 235-8747

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- The *Saipan Tribune* will decide how often community announcements are going to be published.
- For Travelogue, the *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to choose which pictures to publish.

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- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any PTI cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

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ADVERTISING For inquiries contact 235-2769. E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 11, 2008

DEPARTURES

Saipan-Guam

CO9317	5:00am	5:50am	1,2,4,5,6,7
CO9597	8:30am	9:20am	1,2,5,6
CO9313	8:30am	10:00am	3,4,7 via Rota
CO9601	12:30pm	1:20pm	Daily
CO9603	3:30pm	4:20pm	Daily
CO9605	6:30pm	7:20pm	Daily
CO9599	9:30pm	10:20pm	2,3,4,5,6,7

Saipan-Seoul

OZ 604	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ 604	2:40am	6:30am	2,3,4,5,6,7
OZ 606	3:30pm	7:00pm	2,4,6,7

Saipan-Busan

OZ 608	4:00am	7:35am	1,4,5,7

Guam-Manila

CO 891	6:00am	10:30am	3 via Yap and Koror
CO 893	6:30am	8:05am	6
CO 893	8:25am	10:00am	2
CO 893	5:50pm	9:10pm	5 via Koror
CO 933	8:00pm	9:40pm	Daily
PR 111	6:00am	7:45am	1,2,4,6,7

Saipan-Manila

CO 895	4:45pm	6:35pm	6
CO 895	6:45pm	8:35pm	3

Saipan-Nagoya

NW 078	8:30am	11:10am	Daily

Guam-Nagoya

CO 971	7:45am	10:30am	1,2,4,5,6,7
NW 023	4:15pm	7:05pm	Daily
CO 904	4:35pm	7:25pm	Daily

Saipan-Narita

NW 078	8:30am	1:30pm	Daily via Nagoya
NW 075	4:55pm	7:30pm	Daily

Guam-Narita

JO 982	4:15am	7:00am	Daily
CO 961	7:20am	9:55am	Daily
CO 006	1:00pm	3:45pm	Daily
JO 942	3:30pm	6:15pm	Daily
NW 081	3:55pm	6:50pm	Daily
NW 073	4:15pm	7:00pm	Daily
CO 963	4:50pm	7:30pm	Daily

Saipan-Osaka

NW 083	4:30pm	7:25pm	Daily

Guam-Hongkong

CO 910	7:45pm	10:40pm	1,5

Saipan-Guanzhou

CZ 3008	5:00am	8:00am	2,6

Saipan-Rota

CO 9313	8:30am	9:05am	3,4,7

Rota-Guam

CO 9313	9:30am	10:00am	3,4,7

Saipan-Shanghai

MU 590	4:20am	7:00am	2,6

ARRIVALS

Guam-Saipan

CO 9316	2:30am	3:20am	1,4,5,6,7
CO 9316	3:30am	4:20am	2
CO9596	7:00am	7:50am	Daily
CO9598	10:15am	11:45am	1,2,6 via Rota
CO9600	10:45am	11:35am	3,4,5,7
CO9602	2:00pm	2:50pm	Daily
CO9604	5:00pm	5:50pm	Daily
CO9606	8:00pm	8:50pm	2,3,4,5,6,7

Seoul-Saipan

OZ 605	9:00am	2:30pm	2,4,6,7
OZ 603	7:40pm	10:00am+1	7
OZ 603	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1,2,3,4,5,6
OZ 607	6:50pm	2:50am+1	3,7 via Busan
OZ 607	7:30pm	2:50am+1	4 via Busan

Busan-Saipan

OZ 607	9:30pm	2:50am+1	3,4,6,7

Manila-Guam

CO 894	11:20am	4:55pm	2
CO 894	7:45pm	1:20am+1	6
CO 892	9:45pm	5:25am+1	3 via Koror
CO 892	9:45pm	6:30am+1	3 via Koror and Yap
CO 892	10:10pm	5:30am+1	5 via Koror
CO 934	11:10pm	4:40am+1	Daily
PR 110	10:15pm	4:00am+1	1,3,5,6,7

Manila-Saipan

CO 890	9:15am	2:55pm	6
CO 890	11:45am	5:35pm	3

Nagoya-Saipan

NW 077	8:45pm	1:10am+1	Daily

Nagoya-Guam

NW 024	10:00am	2:40pm	Daily
CO 970	11:30am	4:00pm	Daily
CO 905	8:25pm	12:50am+1	1,3,4,5,6,7

Narita-Saipan

NW 076	10:35am	3:05pm	Daily
NW 077	6:15pm	1:10am+1	Daily via Nagoya

Narita-Guam

JO 941	9:30am	2:05pm	Daily
NW 074	9:45am	2:25pm	Daily
CO 962	11:05am	3:35pm	Daily
CO 007	5:15pm	9:50pm	Daily
NW 082	8:30pm	1:15am+1	Daily
CO 964	8:40pm	1:15am+1	Daily
JO 981	9:30pm	2:05am+1	Daily

Osaka-Saipan

NW 084	10:40am	3:10pm	Daily

Hongkong-Guam

CO 910	11:40pm	6:20am+1	1,5

Guanzhou-Saipan

CZ 3007	8:00pm	4:00am+1	1,5

Rota-Saipan

CO 9598	11:10am	11:45am	1,2,6

Guam-Rota

CO 9598	10:15am	10:45am	1,2,6

Shanghai-Saipan

MU 589	8:05am	3:00am+1	1,5

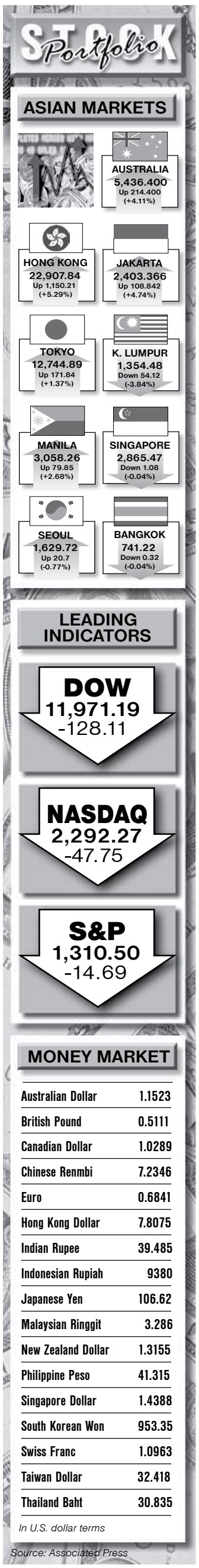
(Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; PR: Philippine Airlines; CZ: China Southern; CA: Air China; NW: Northwest; JO: Japan Airlines; OZ: Asiana. ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota			
FRE 100	7:00am	7:30am	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 100	7:50am	8:20am	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 200	9:00am	9:30am	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 200	9:50am	10:15am	Daily
Guam-Rota			
FRE 300	4:00pm	4:30pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 300	4:50pm	5:25pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 400	6:00pm	6:30pm	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 400	6:45pm	7:15pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian			
FRE 101	6:45am	6:55am	Daily
FRE 103	7:30am	7:40am	Daily
FRE 105	8:00am	8:10am	Daily
FRE 107	8:40am	8:50am	Daily
FRE 109*	9:10am	9:20am	Daily
FRE 111*	10:45am	10:55am	Daily

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily

Business



Guam urged to avail of USDA's guaranteed loan

GUAM—The outlook for Guam's economy in 2008 is brighter than it has been in a number of years. The primary reason for this is clearly the impending military buildup on the island, which is a part of a global redistribution of U.S. forces throughout the world. Also, Guam's tourism has seen some revival over the past several years, and many in this industry remain optimistic.

But how prepared are you for this expected growth and development? Are you considering whether the time is right to purchase that new home or condominium? Do you need to expand your business or restructure existing debts? Does your business need to purchase real estate, or do you need funds for working capital or machinery and equipment?

Those of us with mortgages, or those contemplating obtaining a mortgage, already understand the world of conventional loans. But how familiar are we with guaranteed financing? Throughout rural communities in Guam, guaranteed loans are made by lenders following the same basic steps they use in conventional loans. The difference is, these loans are, in essence, "co-signed" by the federal government. In a guaranteed loan, USDA Rural Development would be providing payments, based on a predetermined percentage, of any losses the lenders may incur if the borrowers fall short on their commitments.

Benefits to borrowers and communities abound! Borrowers benefit from guaranteed loans because this type of financing, in many cases, may result in lower interest rates and improved terms. Guaranteed loans give borrowers financing for their homes, community projects, and/or businesses when financing through a bank or through a mortgage company's conventional loan process may have been denied. Communities benefit by encouraging new businesses, obtaining essential community infrastructure, or welcoming new homeowners who will contribute to their neighborhoods.

Banks benefit, as well, because guaranteed loans are marketable in the secondary market. This allows banks an increased return on their investment, while providing the customer with long-term fixed rates. Relationships with new customers often grow into other financial dealings, such as new checking accounts, savings accounts, CD accounts, auto loans and other opportunities for the bank.

Guaranteed loans also have specific advantages for home mortgages. Along with a competitive interest rate, other advantages include no down payment and no requirement for mortgage insurance, which all contribute to that goal of saving money. For eligible households, a loan that provides 100% financing can be extremely beneficial. Guaranteed loans are also available for purchasing, rehabilitating or building new apartments in rural areas.

Guaranteed loans also offer specific advantages for businesses, whether a sole proprietor, corporation, or a non-government organization. The impending build-up of military forces in Guam and the optimism in the tourism industry offer many opportunities for new and existing businesses. Examples of projects that have obtained a guaranteed loan from USDA Rural Development in the past include wholesale and retail outlets, assisted living centers, a medical facility, a commercial fishing venture, a port facility, a health and fitness gymnasium, hotels, restaurants, commercial real estate, a construction company and the purchase of an apartment complex. In addition to the business and community aspect of guaranteed lending, 88 families in Hawaii and the Western Pacific were able to purchase homes during the past year, taking advantage of these lower interest rates and no-down-payment guaranteed loans.

If you are looking to buy a home, finance a community project such as a community center, or expand or create new business opportunities in Guam, or to learn more about USDA's guaranteed loans contact USDA Rural Development's Guam office at (671) 472-7364/7272.

Further information on rural programs is available by visiting USDA's web site at http://www.rurdev.usda.gov. ***(USDA)***

Oil prices drop on fears of recession

NEW YORK (AP)—Oil futures fell Tuesday on mounting concerns that the U.S. economy may be heading toward a recession that would dampen demand for crude.

While the Federal Reserve's interest rate cut helped crude futures recover from much steeper earlier losses, many investors doubt the move will stave off a serious slowdown.

"Whenever you see a rate cut of that magnitude between (Fed) meetings ... it conjures up images of desperation," said Jim Ritterbusch, president of Ritterbusch and Associates in Galena, Ill.

Light, sweet crude for February delivery fell 72 cents to settle at $89.85 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange; earlier, prices had fallen as low as $86.11. Oil last traded that low on Dec. 6. The February contract expired at the close of trading. March crude fell 71 cents to settle at $89.21 a barrel.

The Fed cut the federal funds rate—the interest that banks charge each other on overnight loans—by three-quarters of a percentage point to 3.5 percent. It was the biggest single cut of its kind in recent memory.

Stocks dive, then rebound after Fed cut

NEW YORK (AP)—The opening bell hadn't even sounded on Wall Street when the Federal Reserve announced an emergency interest-rate cut. The Dow Jones industrial average fell 465 points—including 300 in the first minute—then rebounded to finish down a more bearable 128.

The recovery Tuesday was a victory of sorts for a battered market. But a long-term comeback may depend on factors much more difficult to achieve—a turnaround in the housing market and renewed confidence among U.S. consumers, who hold up most of the economy.

The alarming early drop in U.S. stocks followed the lead of markets abroad, where investors fled stocks and sent indexes plummeting on fears of a U.S. recession that could spread to other global economies.

By the close, the Dow had recovered to a loss of 128.11, or just over 1 percent, at 11,971.19.

Before trading began, the Federal Reserve moved to slash its benchmark federal funds rate by 0.75 percentage points, to 3.5 percent. It was the widest cut since 1990, the beginning of what the Fed says is a comparable period in the way it handled the rate.

AP

President Bush, center, with Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson, left, and Charles Schwab, right, addresses the media in the Roosevelt Room of the White House in Washington, Tuesday, Jan. 22, 2008.

US moves to avert economic meltdown

WASHINGTON (AP)—Jolted by global recession fears, the Federal Reserve slashed interest rates Tuesday, and President Bush and leaders of Congress joined in a rare show of cooperation in promising urgent action to pump up the economy with upwards of $150 billion in tax cuts and government spending.

Market meltdowns overnight around the globe and growing anxiety at home stirred lawmakers and the administration toward swift action, possibly within a few weeks. Wall Street plummeted as the day began, following Asian stocks, then warily eased its sell-off after the Fed ordered the biggest cut on record in a key interest rate. The Dow Jones industrials, down 465 points at one point, closed the day off 128.

The Fed, announcing its action after an emergency video conference Monday night, indicated further rate reductions were likely, aimed at encouraging people and companies to start spending again.

"The urgency that we feel at home is now even more urgent as we see the impact of our markets on others," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said after both Democratic and Republican lawmakers met with Bush at the White House.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said the goal was to get a deal through Congress and on Bush's desk within roughly three weeks—lightning speed compared with the usual snail's pace on Capitol Hill. His Republican counterpart, Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, agreed the aim was action in the next few weeks and said, "That, by the standards in Congress, is pretty fast."

Bush expressed confidence that he and the Democratic-led Congress could put aside bitter differences that have marked his presidency.

"I believe we can find common ground to get something done that's big enough, effective enough so that an economy that is inherently strong gets a boost—to make sure that this uncertainty doesn't translate into more economic woes for our workers and small business people," Bush said in the Cabinet Room.

BankPacific slashes prime rate to 6.50 pct.

The Federal Reserve Cut its key fed funds interest rate yesterday, prompting BankPacific to cut its prime rate by 0.75 percent to 6.50 percent.

"This is our fourth reduction in the prime rate in recent months and marks a near 30-month low in the prime rate. With commercial loans now priced this low, new opportunities open up for individuals and businesses in our region," said BankPacific president Philip Flores.

"We are also seeing a return to near historic lows in residential loan rates," he said. "The fed's reaction to the current economic situation in the states is working to our region's advantage."

BankPacific is full service bank and stressed it has no exposure to subprime crisis sweeping through many other financial institutions. ***(BankPacific)***

Nation

17 years for ex-'dirty bomb' suspect

MIAMI (AP)—Jose Padilla, an American once accused of plotting with al-Qaida to detonate a radioactive "dirty bomb," was sentenced Tuesday to a relatively lenient 17-year prison term on unrelated terror support charges.

Prosecutors, who long ago dropped the "dirty bomb" claim that made Padilla infamous, had sought life sentences for Padilla and two co-defendants, but a federal judge said authorities never even proved Padilla was a terrorist.

"There is no evidence that these defendants personally maimed, kidnapped or killed anyone in the United States or elsewhere," U.S. District Judge Marcia Cooke said. "There was never a plot to overthrow the United States government."

AP

In this Jan. 5, 2006, file photo, Jose Padilla, center, is escorted by federal marshals on his arrival in Miami.

Cooke took into account the harsh, isolated conditions Padilla faced during the 3 1/2 years he was held in a brig, without charge, as an enemy combatant after his 2002 arrest. Defense lawyers claim he was tortured by the military, but U.S. officials denied that and Cooke never used the word torture.

Padilla, 37, and co-defendants Adham Amin Hassoun, 45, and Kifah Wael Jayyousi, 46, were convicted in August after a three-month trial of being part of a support cell that sent recruits, money and supplies to Islamic extremists worldwide, including al-Qaida. Padilla was billed as a "star recruit," while Hassoun was the recruiter and Jayyousi served as a financier and propagandist in the cell's early years, according to trial testimony.

Padilla was added to the case in late 2005, just as his legal challenges to continued detention without criminal charge were reaching the U.S. Supreme Court. Padilla was declared an enemy combatant a month after his highly publicized arrest on the purported radioactive "dirty bomb" plot, but those allegations were quietly discarded.

The strongest evidence in the case was a form Padilla completed in 2000 to attend an al-Qaida training camp in Afghanistan that was recovered by the CIA shortly after the U.S. invasion in late 2001. Prosecutors repeatedly invoked the al-Qaida connection and used a video of an old Osama bin Laden interview in an attempt to link the three to the world's most notorious terrorist.

Ultimately, Cooke said at the sentencing hearing, there was not enough evidence linking Padilla and the other two men to specific acts of terrorism or victims.

ACROSS THE NATION

DNA frees Colo. man convicted of murder

FORT COLLINS, Colo. (AP)—Timothy Masters walked out of court a free man for the first time in nearly a decade Tuesday, his murder conviction wiped out by DNA evidence that points to another suspect. Masters, 36, who was sentenced to life in prison in 1999, was ordered freed on a personal recognizance bond by Larimer County District Judge Joseph Weatherby. Prosecutors promised to decide quickly whether to try him again. New tests announced last week showed DNA found on the victim's clothing was not from Masters but from someone else. Applause broke out in the courtroom as the hearing ended, but Masters showed little emotion as he hugged members of his defense team.

Police: Missing college student abducted

RENO, Nev. (AP)—Police say they believe a 19-year-old college student who mysteriously disappeared from a friend's home over the weekend was kidnapped. Brianna Denison was last seen around 4 a.m. Sunday when she went to sleep on her friend's couch after a night of partying. Police Lt. Robert McDonald said drops of blood were left on a pillow she used and a teddy bear her friend gave her is missing. The home's front door had been left unlocked overnight, he said. Her purse, cell phone and clothing were left at the home undisturbed, McDonald said. Denison is a psychology student at Santa Barbara City College in Santa Barbara, Calif., and was back in her hometown of Reno for winter break.

New armored truck sees first Iraq death

WASHINGTON (AP)—A soldier killed over the weekend south of Baghdad was the first American death in a roadside bomb attack on a newly introduced, heavily armored vehicle, military officials said Tuesday. The death, however, has not changed the Pentagon's mind about its plans to spend more than $22 billion to buy thousands of the mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles, known by the acronym MRAP, for the Army and Marine Corps to use in Iraq and Afghanistan, said Pentagon Press Secretary Geoff Morrell. The soldier who died Saturday was the gunner who sits atop the MRAP vehicle. Morrell said it is still not clear whether he died as a result of the explosion or the rollover.

Ex-N.Y. prosecutor charged with teen sex

NEW CITY, N.Y. (AP)—An ex-prosecutor and former PTA president who is also the wife of a suburban police chief has been charged with having sex, smoking marijuana and drinking with high-school-age children. Beth Modica, 44, a former assistant district attorney in Rockland County and Queens, pleaded not guilty Tuesday to counts including statutory rape, sex abuse and endangering children. Her hands were cuffed in front of her in court, where the indictment was unsealed. She later posted $75,000 bail. Her husband is police chief of Spring Valley. He is "not implicated whatsoever," Rockland County District Attorney Thomas Zugibe said.

McCain raises money in Giuliani's turf

NEW YORK (AP)—Republican presidential hopeful John McCain raised money Tuesday on rival Rudy Giuliani's turf and picked up the endorsement of the former New York mayor's longtime nemesis.

Former New York Sen. Alfonse D'Amato switched his allegiance in the presidential race from Fred Thompson, who abandoned his bid Tuesday, to McCain. D'Amato has long been at odds with Giuliani.

"If you want to win in November, John McCain is the man," said D'Amato, calling the senator a national treasure and a true hero. "This is a man whose time is here, who can restore confidence and people can have confidence in what he says."

Recent polls showed McCain leading or tied with Giuliani in New York, which votes in two weeks and has a 101-delegate prize. Giuliani once had an enormous advantage but has seen his standing erode in New York and nationally as he lost six straight primary contests.

Like McCain, Giuliani left Florida on Tuesday to raise money in New York at a private fundraiser. He has pinned his candidacy on winning Florida's contest next Tuesday but now finds himself threatened on his home turf.

McCain, for his part, seized on a debate Monday night in which Democratic candidates talked about him as if he were the GOP nominee.

"It's pretty clear that they view me as their most formidable opponent, and I agree with them," McCain said. "It's obvious that I'm the one that they're most concerned about."

Asked earlier in the day if he were going to New York to make a statement about the state, McCain referenced a prolific U.S. bank robber and told reporters: "No. It's the Willie Sutton syndrome. When they asked him why he robbed banks and he said it's because that's where the money is."

Aides say McCain has enough money to stay on TV in Florida with heavy levels of ads for the next week, and is trying to fill his bank account for the expensive de facto national primary day on Feb. 5, when some two dozen states vote.

ROE VS WADE ANNIVERSARY AP

Thousands of anti-abortion marchers gather near the Supreme Court during the annual March for Life, Tuesday, Jan. 22, 2008, in Washington. A smaller crowd of several dozen abortion-rights supporters held their own rally later, marking the 35th anniversary of the landmark Supreme Court ruling that established the nationwide right to abortion. The rally comes 35 years after the Supreme Court ruled that a Texas woman with the pseudonym Jane Roe had a constitutional right to have an abortion.

Missing US Marine spotted in Mexico

GUADALAJARA, Mexico (AP)—Missing Marine Cesar Laurean, wanted in the slaying of a pregnant colleague, visited relatives in Mexico last week but left without saying where he was headed, a man identified as his cousin said Tuesday.

Juan Antonio Ramos Ramirez told The Associated Press that Laurean walked into his liquor store last Monday or Tuesday and the two cousins chatted for 10 minutes about their families. Laurean then told Ramos Ramirez that he had to get back to two friends outside, but he might return. He never came back.

CNN first reported Tuesday that Laurean had briefly stopped by Ramos Ramirez's liquor store in Zapopan, just outside Guadalajara.

Days later, Ramos Ramirez saw a television report that Laurean was wanted in the United States for killing 20-year-old Lance Cpl. Maria Lauterbach.

"We were completely shocked," he said.

Authorities have said they suspected that Laurean had fled to Mexico, but the comments from Ramos Ramirez were the first public confirmation that the Marine had been in the country.

Folk medicines contain lead

HOUSTON (AP)—Maria didn't mean to poison her children. Quite the opposite. Worried about her daughters' lack of appetite, the young Houston mother was merely following her grandmother's advice when she gave the two girls and a niece a dose of "greta"—a Mexican folk medicine used to treat children's stomach ailments.

What Maria, who asked that her last name not be used, did not know then, but now will never forget, is that the bright orange powder is nearly 90 percent lead.

Fortunately, doctors detected the dangerously high levels of the toxic metal in the little girls' blood during a routine checkup a week later.

But others are not so lucky. Health departments around the country say traditional medicines used by many immigrants from Latin America, India and other parts of Asia are the second most common source of lead poisoning in the U.S.—surpassed only by lead paint—and may account for tens of thousands of such cases among children each year.

Asia

ASIAN BRIEFS

Trial of dissident China writer begins

BEIJING (AP)—A Chinese dissident who wrote about corruption went on trial Tuesday for subversion, his lawyer said, a charge used frequently to silence whistle-blowers and critics of the ruling Communist Party. Lu Gengsong's trial at the Hangzhou Intermediate Court lasted three hours, but a result was not expected for about another month, said his lawyer, Mo Shaoping. Hangzhou is south of Shanghai in eastern China. "We are still trying to defend Lu's innocence," Mo told The Associated Press. Mo said the indictment cited 19 essays Lu had posted on the Internet, but he did not elaborate on the allegedly subversive passages. He was charged with "inciting subversion of state power," and could face years in prison if he is convicted.

Suharto's health takes new downturn

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP)—The health of former Indonesian dictator Suharto deteriorated Wednesday, with a potentially lethal infection spreading through his body, his doctors said. Suharto, who brutally ruled the nation for 32 years until being toppled a decade ago, has developed digestive trouble and severe pneumonia, said Dr. Joko Raharjo, a member of the presidential medical team. "We are trying hard to find and detect the bacteria and treat him with proper antibiotics, but we cannot guarantee it will be successful," he told reporters. Suharto, who was rushed to a hospital with anemia and a dangerously low heart rate Jan. 4, has suffered multiple organ failure and is on a ventilator, dialysis machine and is being fed through a tube.

Malaysian state separates shopping sexes

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP)—Malaysia's only state run by the Islamic opposition party will get stricter about enforcing separate lines for men and women at supermarkets, an official said Tuesday. Authorities in the northern state of Kelantan—governed by the opposition Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party—will fine supermarkets and shops if they let men and women use the same lines at checkout counters, said party spokesman Anual Bakri Haron. Chief Minister Nik Aziz Nik Mat has called for stricter enforcement "to safeguard the ladies" from being harassed and to avoid close proximity between opposite sexes while lining up to buy groceries, Anual said. "He wants the enforcement to be looked into thoroughly."

37 militants killed in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP)—Islamic militants in Pakistan attacked a fort near the Afghan border Tuesday, sparking fighting with government forces that left five troops and 37 fighters dead, the army said.

The attack, the second this month, occurred in South Waziristan, a lawless tribal region where al-Qaida- and Taliban-linked militants operate.

The militants targeted the Lahda Fort, which houses paramilitary troops, and a nearby observation post in a pre-dawn raid in South Waziristan, located along the border with Afghanistan, the military said in a statement.

Thirty-seven militants and five troops were killed in the intense fighting, the statement said. Two other soldiers were killed and seven wounded in a clash in the neighboring North Waziristan, it said.

The violence in the border region, as well as a series of suicide attacks that have killed hundreds in recent months, is triggering uncertainty in the country ahead of Feb. 18 elections that many predict will weaken President Pervez Musharraf's grip on power.

More than 150 rebels and soldiers are reported to have been killed in the region this month alone.

On Jan. 10, insurgents also attacked Lahda Fort. The military said then that between 40 and 50 of the attackers were killed. Last week, the militants overran a second fort in the region, leaving up to 22 soldiers dead or missing in a major embarrassment for the military.

The latest attack on Lahda Fort came hours before Adm. William Fallon—the head of the U.S. Central Command and top commander of American forces in the Middle East—arrived in Pakistan for talks with army chief Ashfaq Kayani, the Pakistan army and the U.S. embassy said.

The army said in a statement the two men discussed the "security situation" in the region, but gave no more details.

AP

Pakistani army troops keep position on an armored vehicle, as they patrol in the street of Kanju near Mingora, the main town of Pakistan's Swat Valley along Afghan border, Tuesday, Jan. 22, 2008.

Afghan journalist sentenced to death

KABUL,Afghanistan (AP)—An Afghan court on Tuesday sentenced a 23-year-old journalism student to death for distributing a paper he printed off the Internet that said three judges violated the tenets of Islam, an official said.

The three-judge panel sentenced Sayad Parwez Kambaksh to death for distributing a paper that humiliated Islam, said Fazel Wahab, the chief judge in the northern province of Balkh, where the trial took place. Wahab did not preside over the trial.

Kambaksh's family and the head of a journalists group denounced the verdict and said Kambaksh was not represented by a lawyer at trial. Members of a clerics council had been pushing for Kambaksh to be punished.

The case now goes to the first of two appeals courts, Wahab said. Kambaksh, who has been jailed since October, will remain in custody during appeal.

Wahab said he did not immediately have the details of the paper that Kambaksh circulated, other than that it was against Islam. Kambaksh discussed the paper with his teacher and classmates at Balkh University and several students complained to the government, Wahab said.

Kambaksh's brother, Yacoubi Brahimi, described Tuesday's proceeding as a "secret trial," saying the family did not know it had been scheduled. Some have accused Kambaksh of writing the paper in question, but Brahimi said that his brother printed it off the Internet.

"He told them he didn't write this article," said Brahimi. "It was written by an Iranian."

Wahab said that Kambaksh told the court that he could defend himself and did not need a lawyer. But Kambaksh's brother said his brother should have had an attorney.

Tough talker likely to become Thai PM

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP)—Samak Sundaravej—the man likely to become Thailand's next prime minister—is known for his sharp tongue and short temper.

Whether erupting at reporters for asking "stupid!" questions or whipping up curries on his TV cooking show, the 72-year-old has gained fame—and notoriety—largely thanks to his words.

He minced few words in his campaign for last month's elections, declaring himself the proxy for deposed prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra. His platform was a carbon copy of Thaksin's populist agenda, which provided cheap health care and low-interest loans to the poor.

Samak's People's Power Party heads a coalition with two-thirds of parliament's 480 seats, making him the most likely candidate to become prime minister when parliament votes Friday.

"He comes across as belligerent, aggressive and uncompromising," said Thitinan Pongsidhirak, a political scientist and professor at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University. "But many people find him affable. He's kind of like your uncle. He's folksy, and not afraid to be a bit profane. He's straight-shooting and connects with a lot of people."

Charisma alone would not have propelled Samak to the premiership. But he won widespread support by piggybacking on the popularity of Thaksin, the billionaire tycoon ousted in a 2006 coup for alleged corruption and abuse of power.

"I don't like Samak's mouth. He's always chewing people out. But I like Thaksin," said taxi driver Prawut Panto, who like many cabbies in Bangkok comes from the rural heartland that supports Thaksin. "I voted for Samak because we know Thaksin is backing him."

China says no to pressure on Myanmar

BEIJING (AP)—China on Tuesday rejected U.S. demands for stepped-up pressure on Myanmar, whose governing junta has been accused of spurning real dialogue with the pro-democracy opposition.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu said China wanted to see stability, democracy and development in the country also known as Burma.

However, Jiang urged the international community to be "objective when viewing the Myanmar situation ... and provide constructive assistance."

China objects to Western criticisms of the military regime, claiming that conditions in Myanmar have improved dramatically since a violent crackdown on peaceful protests in September.

"I don't think sanctions are helpful," Jiang told reporters at a regularly scheduled news conference.

Myanmar's military rulers say 10 people were killed when civilians and Buddhist monks were beaten and arrested after pro-democracy demonstrations following a sharp fuel price hike. Diplomats and dissidents put the toll much higher.

Jiang's comments come a day after a senior U.S. official urged the international community to put more pressure on the junta, and said Washington had asked China to help arrange for a new visit to Myanmar by U.N. Security Council envoy Ibrahim Gambari to help push for national reconciliation.

They also follow a meeting in Beijing between senior Chinese foreign policy adviser Tang Jiaxuan and Myanmar Deputy Foreign Minister U Maung Myint.

OUST GLORIA! AP

A young protester holds a sign that reads "Burden to the masses, Oust Gloria!" during a protest march near the Malacañang presidential palace in Manila, Philippines, on Tuesday Jan. 22, 2008. Several thousand farmers and left-wing activists marched through the Philippine capital Tuesday to mark the 1987 massacre by troops of 13 demonstrators who were seeking fair distribution of farmland.

World

Suicide bomber attacks Iraqi school

BAGHDAD (AP)—A suicide bomber pushing an electric heater atop a cart packed with hidden explosives attacked a high school north of Baghdad on Tuesday, leaving students and teachers bloodied and bewildered as insurgents appeared to be expanding their list of targets.

The bombing—one of two attacks near Iraqi schools on the same day—follows a wave of recent blasts blamed on al-Qaida in Iraq against funerals and social gatherings.

The trend points to the possibility that al-Qaida has shifted tactics to focus increasingly on so-called soft targets and undermine public confidence that things are looking better in the country. The backlash also coincides with a U.S.-led offensive trying to uproot insurgents from strongholds around Baghdad.

In the suicide attack, the bomber posed as a shopper or merchant transporting an electric heater on a chilly winter day—an apparent attempt to deflect attention from the explosive-rigged cart.

The blast struck the front of a two-story schoolhouse in Baqouba about 8:30 a.m., half an hour after classes began. Panicked parents rushed to find out if their children were alive or dead.

A 25-year-old male bystander was killed and 21 people were wounded—12 students, eight teachers and one policeman, according to a doctor at Baqouba General Hospital who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was afraid of being targeted by militants.

"I can't think of any reason to target students," said 15-year-old Mohammed Abbas, his wounded head in a bandage as his father stood near his hospital bed in Baqouba, about 35 miles northeast of Baghdad. "We did not expect that explosions would reach our school."

AP

An Iraqi soldier inspects a a damaged class room in a school in Baqouba, some 60 kilometers (35 miles) northeast of Baghdad, Iraq, Tuesday, Jan. 22, 2008.

Musharraf: Pakistan isn't hunting Osama

PARIS (AP)—Pervez Musharraf says he still gets the question a lot: When will Osama bin Laden and his top deputy be caught? The Pakistani president insists it's more important for his 100,000 troops on the Afghan border to root out the Taliban than search for al-Qaida leaders.

Musharraf

That bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahri are still at large "doesn't mean much," the former general said Tuesday on the second day of a swing through Europe. He suggested they are far less a threat to his regime than Taliban-linked militants entrenched in Pakistan's west.

Bin Laden and al-Zawahri are believed to be hiding somewhere in the lawless tribal areas along Afghanistan's frontier with Pakistan.

"The 100,000 troops that we are using ... are not going around trying to locate Osama bin Laden and Zawahri, frankly," Musharraf told a conference at the French Institute for International Relations. "They are operating against terrorists, and in the process, if we get them, we will deal with them certainly."

A U.S. ally in its war on extremist groups, Musharraf has come under increasing pressure following the assassination of opposition leader Benazir Bhutto last month and for his brief declaration of emergency rule in early November.

Musharraf, who as commander of Pakistan's military seized power in a bloodless coup in 1999, said the remnants of Afghanistan's former Taliban regime and its Pakistani sympathizers are the "more serious issue" for both countries.

US falls short on new Iran sanctions

BERLIN (AP)—The five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council and Germany agreed Tuesday to impose new sanctions on Iran over its suspect nuclear program, yet the measures appeared to fall short of what the Bush administration had wanted.

After months of diplomatic bickering and U.S. pressure, Washington and its European allies overcame strong Chinese and Russian resistance to a third U.N. sanctions resolution and they all approved a draft that expands and strengthens the penalties that were in the two earlier ones.

The draft was presented as a sign of international resolve that Iran should not be allowed to develop nuclear weapons and unity on the need to press the country into suspending its uranium enrichment that can produce material needed to make the bomb.

But the document, hailed by U.S. officials as a victory for the Bush administration's tough line on Iran, was not released. And participants in the two-hour negotiating session that produced it here pointedly refused to discuss details.

Forced annulment keeps couple apart

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP)—Two years ago, a knock on Fatima and Mansour al-Timani's door shattered the life they had built together.

It was the police, delivering news that a judge had annulled their marriage in absentia after some of Fatima's relatives sought the divorce on grounds she had married beneath her.

That was just the beginning of an ordeal for a couple who - under Saudi Arabia's strict segregation rules - can no longer live together. They sued to reverse the ruling, publicized their story and sought help from a Saudi human rights group.

But the two remain apart and Fatima said she is considering suicide if her recent appeal to King Abdullah does not reunite her with her husband.

"Only the king can resolve my case," Fatima told The Associated Press by telephone in a rare interview. "I want to return to my husband, but if that is not possible, I need to know so I can put an end to my life."

Fatima's case underscores shortcomings in the kingdom's Islamic legal system in which rules of evidence are shaky, lawyers are not always present and sentences often depend on the whim of judges.

The most frequent victims are women, who already suffer severe restrictions on daily life in Saudi Arabia: They cannot drive, appear before a judge without a male representative, or travel abroad without a male guardian's permission.

Recently, the king did intervene and pardon another high-profile defendant - a rape victim who was sentenced to lashes and jail time for being in a car with a man who was not her relative.

The two cases have brought Saudi human rights once again into the international spotlight, revealing not only the weakness of the kingdom's justice system, but the scant rights of Saudi women.

"When I heard that the (rape victim) was pardoned, I couldn't believe it. My case is so much simpler than hers, since my divorce is invalid," Fatima said.

Fatima said her husband, a hospital administrator, followed Saudi tradition in asking her father for permission to marry her in 2003.

"My brother reported good things about him, so my dad accepted his proposal," said Fatima, a computer specialist who was 29 when she married.

She said her father knew that Mansour came from a less prominent tribe than hers, but that he did not mind because he "cared about the man himself."

A few months after the wedding, several of Fatima's relatives, including a half brother, persuaded her father to give them power of attorney to file a lawsuit demanding an annulment, she said.

WORLD BRIEFS

Forgery probe targets critic of Putin

MOSCOW (AP)—Prosecutors announced a forgery investigation Tuesday against the campaign of the only liberal Kremlin critic still in Russia's presidential race, a contest already expected to be won easily by Vladimir Putin's hand-picked candidate to succeed him. Liberal opposition groups are small and weak, and former prime minister Mikhail Kasyanov has been given no chance in the election, even if the probe doesn't push him out of the race. A spokeswoman for the prosecutor-general's office, Tatiana Chernyshova, said on state television that the investigation involved possible forged signatures on nominating petitions for Kasyanov. Chernyshova said suspected false signatures were found in the Yaroslavl and Mari-El regions.

Israel eases blockade; Gaza lights on

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP)—Israel sent fuel to Gaza's power plant on Tuesday, easing its five-day blockade of the Palestinian territory amid growing international concern about a humanitarian crisis. The U.S. warned Israel not to add to the hardship for ordinary Palestinians but blamed the problem on Gaza's Islamic Hamas rulers. Israel imposed the siege in response to increasing rocket attacks on its border communities by Gaza militants. Despite the easing of the closure, Palestinian militants fired 19 rockets toward Israel on Tuesday, the military said, up from just two on Monday. The lights were back on in most of Gaza City by Tuesday afternoon after a blackout that lasted almost two days.

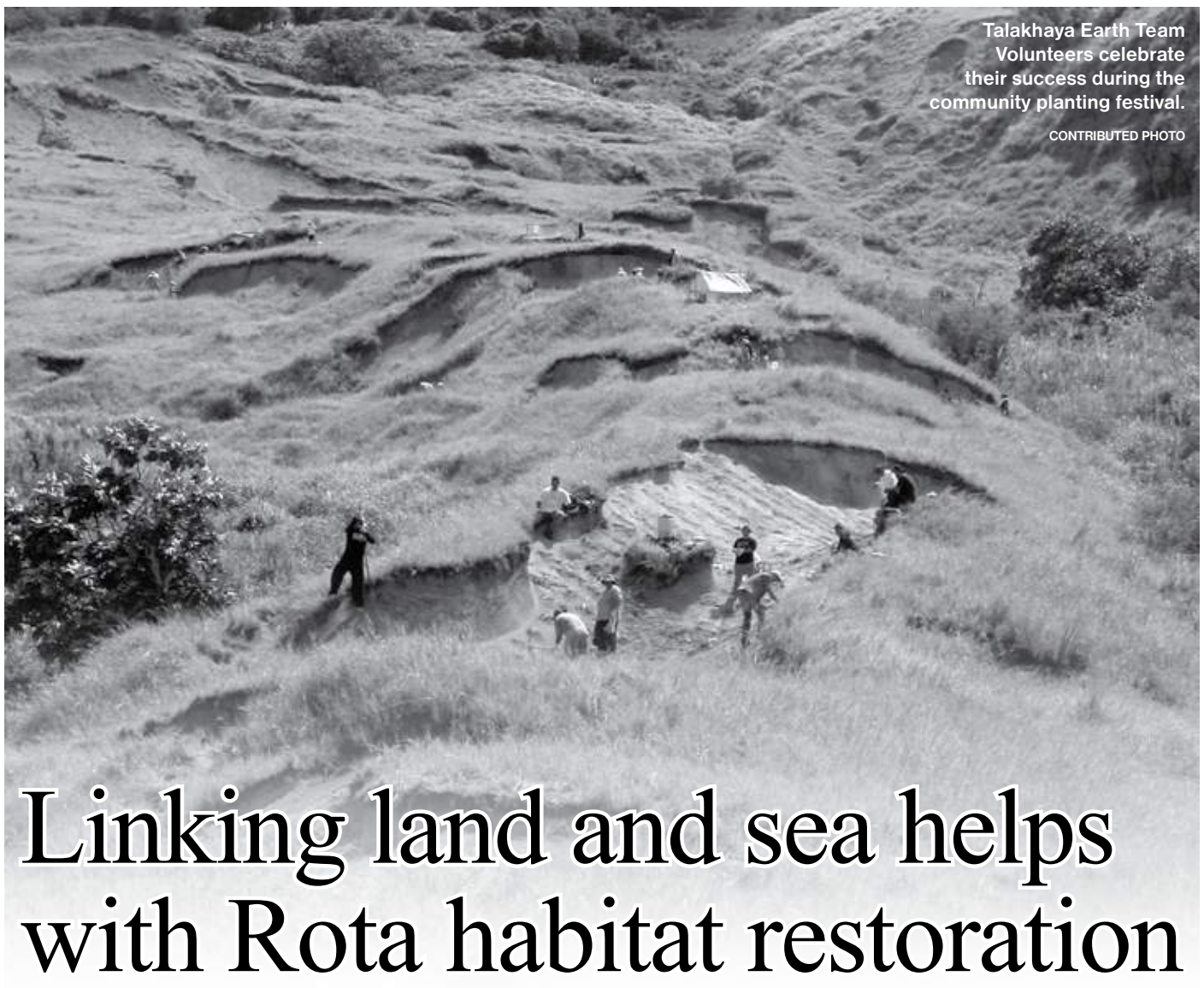
Kenya violence augurs ethnic split

ELDORET, Kenya (AP)—In many regions, the violence following President Mwai Kibaki's re-election has brought a bloody end to decades of coexistence among Kenya's ethnic groups, transforming villages, cities and towns where Kenyans had lived together—however uneasily at times—since independence from Britain in 1963. Some worry the change may be permanent, boding ill for democracy in this once-stable African country. Much of the fighting has pitted other tribes against Kibaki's Kikuyu, long dominant in Kenyan politics and the economy. The vote tapped into a well of resentment that resurfaces regularly at election time in Kenya, but this year's bloodshed has been the most brutal and sustained by far.

Protesters harass Japanese whalers

CANBERRA, Australia (AP)—Environmentalists again clashed with Japanese whalers Tuesday in the Antarctic Ocean, with Greenpeace activists failing in a risky attempt to prevent the fleet's factory ship from refueling. The protesters were drenched with freezing water from Japanese hoses as they piloted an inflatable boat between the factory ship Nisshin Maru and supply ship Oriental Bluebird, a Greenpeace spokesman said from a ship trailing the Japanese fleet. Pictures released by Greenpeace showed the crew of the two whaling ships directing water hoses at the tiny inflatable as it navigated the narrow gap between them.

Environment



Talakhaya Earth Team Volunteers celebrate their success during the community planting festival.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Linking land and sea helps with Rota habitat restoration

Editor's Note: The following was originally published in the January/February edition of Coastal Resources*, a magazine of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The article describes a successful community coral reef project on Rota, Commonwealth of Northern Marianas.*

Hunters on the Island of Rota in the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas often burn the Talakhaya area forest to spur the growth of new vegetation that attracts sambar deer. Not only are these hunters unknowingly destroying the deer's habitat, but the resulting soil erosion is also causing algae growth that is smothering nearshore corals and driving away fish.

Ten agencies on the island have joined forces to replant the habitat and create a community education and outreach program. The effort has resulted in the largest single planting event in the island's history and a campaign message that "Real Hunters Don't Burn."

"People are now beginning to understand the connection between the land and the sea," says Lihla Noori, a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration coral reef management fellow and coordinator of the Talakhaya Project. "By taking the land approach, it's been easier to help people understand why the corals are important."

Critical Area

For a number of years, the Talakhaya watershed has been listed as a critical area, but efforts to address the problems were fragmented. In 2005, the commonwealth received a three-year NOAA coral reef grant to focus on the area.

Noori came on island in 2006 with the task of helping to coordinate the many agencies involved.

Badlands

The soil in the area is in such poor condition, Noori says, that the Department of Lands and Natural Resources first conducted studies to see which plant species would best survive. In September 2006, a group of almost 200 students from both the Rota junior and senior high schools helped plant 2,500 seedlings.

This effort was "moderately successful," says Noori. The rugged mountain terrain made it clear that relying on students was untenable, and the growth of some seedlings was slower than had been hoped.

New Plan

The collaborative adjusted the project plan and came back in June 2007 with 35 community volunteers who worked nearly full time for three weeks planting and fertilizing over 19,000 grass and tree seedlings. The planting teams recorded abundance and location of the seedlings using handheld Global Positioning System units.

Noori notes that getting to the work site required a 40-minute drive in a four-wheel-drive vehicle, followed by a 40-minute hike carrying all the gear that was needed.

"Even with teamwork and adequate resources, we were constantly struggling to overcome different trials and tribulations along the journey," notes James Manglona, head forester for the Department of Lands and Natural Resources.

Growing Together

The results of the planting, however, "have been promising" because they are seeing the seedlings spreading and connecting, he says.

The Division of Environmental Quality is conducting baseline streambed and shoreline water quality monitoring to document the potential change in the watershed's nonpoint runoff.

Outreach efforts also were aided by the community volunteers, who helped spread the word about the project and why it was being done, Noori says.

"Real Hunters Don't Burn" bumper stickers are now popular, as are educational displays presented at public events.

Noting that there is still more planting and outreach that needs to be done, Noori says she considers this phase of the project a success "because of the partnerships and community support."

"This was not an effort that could be done by one agency," she says. "It had to be done with multiple partners. That is where the success lies."

For more information on the Talakhaya Project, contact Lihla Noori at (670) 532-3102, or lihla.noori@gmail.com.

The pink forest

Editor's Note: The voice of CoCo is provided today by John Dax Moreno

If you spent some time in nature recently especially in the limestone forest, you may have noticed that parts of the canopy has turned pink. During the beginning of the year Cynometra ramiflora, locally known as Gulos, puts forth new leaflets in clusters of pale white that turns pink and then finally matures into green.

Gulos is a native small to medium tree found in Guam, Rota, Tinian and Saipan. It is an important component of the native forest providing preferred nesting environment for native birds like the Na'abak (Rufous Fantail), Canario (Golden White-eye), Nosa (Bridled White-eye), and the Tottot (Mariana Fruit Dove). The fruits contain almond-like seeds that are also eaten by the native and endangered Fanihi (Marianas Fruit Bat).

Sadly, Gulos is often overlooked for more flamboyant introduced ornamental plants in planting projects. It is the hope of the author that more native trees that are more culturally and ecologically important to the Commonwealth are planted this year by arborists and volunteer groups.

Planting natives

I read recently in an editorial a call to plant more Flame Trees (Delonix regia). A well-known and celebrated introduced tree, it flowers in bright orange clusters at its peak in June trough July. Most residents now call this time the "Flame Tree season." But planting introduced ornamental trees in a monotypic fashion (too many of the same kind of trees) can make them prone to severe attacks from pests and diseases. Such attacks have occurred on our neighbor island of Guam where the Flame Tree gets recurring defoliation from the caterpillar of a moth (I used to laugh when my late wife used to call it "the wormy tree" with disgust). Narra or Rosewood (Pterocarpus indicus) trees in Malaysia and Singapore systematically planted the same way were devastated by a fungal disease that may have been spread by leafhoppers. The disease was so prevalent that most of the trees died, and cutting infected trees to prevent the spread was ineffective.

Are we seeing similar types of disease attacks in our Flame Trees? At least 11 trees were cut down along Airport Road due to a fungal infection last year. At least 20 trees have succumbed to the disease on Beach Road in the last five years. Incidentally, the beauty of the Flame Tree season at Airport Road was cited in the reason behind planting Flame Trees in the new Puerto Rico pathway. It is important to note that not one native plant species was said to have been utilized in the planting project.

We must remember that there are other priorities of practical importance in planting projects beside just aesthetics. Increased planting of native trees is not only beneficial ecologically to our flora and fauna, but an increase in their presence is an increase in the awareness of their importance- the natural heritage of the islands. Can you imagine a Gulos season? Sadly, most residents of the Commonwealth don't even know what Gulos is or know very little about their native trees. Why just celebrate one tree? Let us celebrate the natives!

To learn more about CoCo visit them at www.coco-cnmi.blogspot.com

CNMI Organization for Conservation Outreach

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
During the beginning of the year, the Gulos tree puts forth new leaflets in clusters of pale white that turns pink and then finally matures into green.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Gulos is a native small to medium tree found in Guam, Rota, Tinian and Saipan. It is an important component of the native forest providing preferred nesting environment for native birds.

Life & Style

Heath Ledger found dead at age 28

By TOM HAYS
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

NEW YORK (AP)—Heath Ledger, the talented 28-year-old actor who gravitated toward dark, brooding roles that defied his leading-man looks, was found dead in a Manhattan apartment, facedown at the foot of his bed with prescription sleeping pills nearby, police said.

There was no obvious indication that the Australian-born Ledger had committed suicide, NYPD spokesman Paul Browne said.

Ledger had an appointment for a massage at the SoHo apartment that is believed to be the home of the "Brokeback Mountain" actor, Browne said. The massage therapist and a housekeeper found his naked body at about 3:30 p.m. Tuesday, police said. They tried to revive him, but he was already dead. "We are all deeply saddened and shocked by this accident," Ledger's publicist, Mara Buxbaum, said in a statement Tuesday night. "This is an extremely difficult time for his loved ones and we are asking the media to please respect the family's privacy and avoid speculation until the facts are known."

Outside the building on an upscale street, paparazzi and gawkers gathered, and several police officers put up barricades to control the crowd of about 300. Onlookers craned their necks as officers brought out a black bodybag on a gurney, took it across the sidewalk and put it into a medical examiner's office van.

As the door opened, bystanders snapped pictures with camera phones, rolled video and said, "He's coming out!"

An autopsy was planned for Wednesday, medical examiner's office spokeswoman Ellen Borakove said.

While not a marquee movie star, Ledger was an award-winning actor who chose his roles carefully rather than cashing in on big-money parts. He was nominated for a best-actor Oscar for his performance as a gay cowboy in "Brokeback Mountain." During filming, he met Michelle Williams, who played his wife in the film. The two had a daughter, now 2-year-old Matilda, and lived together in Brooklyn until they split up last year.

It was a shocking and unforeseen conclusion for one of Hollywood's bright young stars. Though his leading man looks propelled him to early stardom in films like "10 Things I Hate About You" and "A Knight's Tale," his career took a notable turn toward dramatic and brooding roles with 2001's "Monster's Ball."

"I had such great hope for him," said Mel Gibson, who played Ledger's vengeful father in "The Patriot," in a statement. "He was just taking off and to lose his life at such a young age is a tragic loss."

Ledger eschewed Hollywood glitz in favor of a bohemian life in Brooklyn, where he became one of the borough's most famous residents. "Brokeback" would be his breakthrough role, establishing him as one of his generation's finest talents and an actor willing to take risks.

Ledger began to gravitate more toward independent fare, including Lasse Hallstrom's "Casanova" and Terry Gilliam's "The Brothers Grimm," both released in 2005. His 2006 film "Candy" now seems destined to have an especially haunting quality: In a particularly realistic performance, Ledger played a poet wrestling with a heroin addiction along with his girlfriend, played by Abbie Cornish.

But Ledger's most recent choices were arguably the boldest yet: He co-starred in "I'm Not There," in which he played one of the many incarnations of Bob Dylan—as did fellow Australian Cate Blanchett, whose performance in that film earned an Oscar nomination Tuesday for best supporting actress.

And in what may be his final finished performance, Ledger proved that he would not be intimidated by taking on a character as iconic as Jack Nicholson's Joker. Ledger's version of the "Batman" villain, glimpsed in early teaser trailers, made it clear that his Joker would be more depraved and dark.

Curiosity about Ledger's final performance will likely stoke further interest in the summer blockbuster. "Dark Knight" director Christopher Nolan said this month that Ledger's Joker would be wildly different from Nicholson's.

"It was a very great challenge for Heath," Nolan said. "He's extremely original, extremely frightening, tremendously edgy. A very young character, a very anarchic presence that taps into a lot of our basic fears and panic."

Ledger told *The New York Times* in a November interview that he "stressed out a little too much" during the Dylan film and had trouble sleeping while portraying the Joker, whom he called a "psychopathic, mass-murdering, schizophrenic clown with zero empathy."

"Last week I probably slept an average of two hours a night," Ledger told the newspaper. "I couldn't stop thinking. My body was exhausted, and my mind was still going." He said he took two Ambien pills, which worked for only an hour, the paper said.

Ledger was a widely recognized figure in his Manhattan neighborhood, where he used to shop at a home and children's store. Michelle Vella, an employee there, said she had frequently seen Ledger with his daughter—carrying the toddler on his shoulders, or having ice cream with her.

"It's so sad. They were really close," Vella said. "He's a very down-to-earth guy and an amazing father."

Before settling down with Williams, Ledger had relationships with actresses Heather Graham and Naomi Watts. He met Watts while working on "The Lords of Dogtown," a fictionalized version of a cult classic skateboarding documentary, in 2004.

Ledger was born in 1979 to a mining engineer and a French teacher and got his first acting role playing Peter Pan at age 10 in a local theater company. He began acting in independent films as a 16-year-old in Sydney and played a cyclist hoping to land a spot on an Olympic team in a 1996 television show, "Seat."

After several independent films, Ledger moved to Los Angeles at age 19 and starred opposite Julia Stiles in "10 Things I Hate About You." Offers for other teen flicks soon came his way, but Ledger turned them down, preferring to remain idle than sign on for projects he didn't like.

"It wasn't a hard decision for me," Ledger told the Associated Press in 2001. "It was hard for everyone else around me to understand. Agents were like, 'You're crazy,' my parents were like, 'Come on, you have to eat.'"

Australian actor Heath Ledger poses at the Four Seasons Hotel in Beverly Hills, Calif., in this March 31, 2001 file photo. AP

Australians mourn loss of a rising star

By MERAIAH FOLEY
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

SYDNEY, Australia (AP)—Heath Ledger's family rejected any suggestion Wednesday that the actor killed himself and joined fellow Australians in mourning one of their rising stars after he was found dead in a New York apartment.

Ledger's family members faced a throng of journalists in the actor's hometown of Perth in western Australia and read a statement saying his death was purely accidental, though they did not say whether he died of an overdose.

"We, Heath's family, can confirm the very tragic, untimely and accidental passing of our dearly loved son, brother and doting father of Matilda," Ledger's father Kim told reporters. "He was found peacefully asleep in his New York apartment by his housekeeper at 3:30 p.m. U.S. time."

Kim Ledger remembered his 28-year-old son as a "down to earth, generous, kindhearted, life-loving, unselfish individual" who was "extremely inspirational" to those who knew him.

"Heath has touched so many people on so many different levels during his short life but few had the pleasure of truly knowing him," Kim Ledger said. "Please now respect our family's need to grieve and come to terms with our loss privately."

Meanwhile, tributes from fellow Australians flooded in Wednesday.

Actress Nicole Kidman called the death a "terrible tragedy."

Cate Blanchett, who starred with Ledger in the Bob Dylan bio-flick "I'm Not There," a role that earned her an Oscar nomination Tuesday for best supporting actress, said she was "shocked and saddened" at the news.

"I deeply respect Heath's work and always admired his continuing development as an artist," Blanchett said in a statement published by News Ltd. newspapers online. "My thoughts are with his family and close friends."

Australia's Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said Australia had lost one of its brightest talents and that his more challenging roles would be remembered "as some of the great performances by an Australian actor."

Ledger received an Oscar nomination for his role as a troubled gay cowboy in the 2006 film, "Brokeback Mountain," where he met Michelle Williams, who played his wife in the film. The two had a daughter, now 2-year-old Matilda, and lived together in Brooklyn until they split up last year.

Williams' father, Larry, a prominent stock trader currently in Australia fighting extradition to the United States on tax evasion charges, remembered Ledger as "a great talent."

"My heart goes out to everyone in his family and my family," Williams told Sydney's The Daily Telegraph.

Neil Armfield, who directed Ledger in his last Australian film, "Candy," said the actor had "handled his career incredibly well," steering himself toward more challenging roles.

"He made a decision about four years ago to stop being led by producers and managers and to forge his own way," Armfield told Australian Broadcasting Corp. radio "He started working with the most interesting directors. He was so successful at breaking out of the teen idol image."

'No Country,' 'Blood' tie for 8 Oscar noms

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. (AP)—"No Country for Old Men" and "There Will Be Blood" led with eight Academy Awards nominations each Tuesday, among them best picture and acting honors for Daniel Day-Lewis and Javier Bardem—but it remained in doubt whether any stars would cross striking writers' picket lines to attend the ceremony.

"No Country for Old Men," a crime saga about a drug deal gone bad, and "There Will Be Blood," a historical epic set in California's oil boom years, will compete for best picture against the melancholy romance "Atonement," the pregnancy comedy "Juno" and the legal drama "Michael Clayton."

"Atonement" and "Michael Clayton" trailed with seven nominations each, including best actor for George Clooney in the title role of "Clayton." The lead players in "Atonement," Keira Knightley and James McAvoy, were shut out on nominations, however, with teenager Saoirse Ronin the only performer nominated for that film, for supporting actress.

Past Oscar winner Cate Blanchett had two nominations as best actress for the historical pageant "Elizabeth: The Golden Age," and as supporting actress for the Bob Dylan tale "I'm Not There."

On strike since Nov. 5, the Writers Guild of America refused to let its members work on the Golden Globes, which prompted stars to avoid the show in solidarity. Globe organizers were forced to scrap their glitzy telecast and instead announce winners in a swift, humdrum news conference, without anyone on hand to accept the prizes.

Guild leaders have said that if the strike continues, they will not allow writers to work on the Oscars, either, which might leave nominees and other celebrities forced to choose between attending the biggest night in show business on Feb. 24 or staying home to avoid crossing picket lines.

"I would never cross a picket line ever. I couldn't," said Tony Gilroy, a directing nominee for "Michael Clayton." "I'm a 20-year member of the Writers Guild. I think whatever they work out is going to be one way or the other but no, I could never cross a picket line. I think there's a lot of people who feel that way."

Viggo Mortenson, who received a best-acting bid for his performance as a Russian mob member in "Eastern Promises," he won't go if the strike is still on.

"But I have a feeling they'll solve it," he said. "I hope they do. I'm sure my mom would like to see my on TV and so forth. But if there's a strike I'm not crossing the line."

The acting categories generally played out as expected—with a few surprises, including best actress nominee Laura Linney for "The Savages" and best-actor nominee Tommy Lee Jones for "In the Valley of Elah." Neither performance had been high on the awards radar so far this Oscar season.

Best actress looks like a two-person duel between Julie Christie, an Oscar winner for "Darling," as a woman succumbing to Alzheimer's in "Away From Her" and Marion Cotillard as singer Edith Piaf in "La Vie En Rose." Both won Golden Globes, Christie for dramatic actress, Cotillard for musical or comedy actress. Yet they face strong competition from Blanchett, Linney and relative newcomer Ellen Page as a whip-smart pregnant teen in "Juno."

Day-Lewis, an Oscar winner for "My Left Foot," grabbed another best-actor nomination as a flamboyant oil baron in "There Will Be Blood," for which he could emerge as the favorite.

Along with Day-Lewis, Clooney, Mortenson and Jones, the other nominee was Johnny Depp, who won the Globe for musical or comedy actor as the vengeful barber in "Sweeney Todd."

With a Golden Globe and universal acclaim for his performance as a relentless killer, Bardem looks like the closest thing to a front-runner this Oscar season, which is unusually wide open for best picture and other top categories.

Bardem is up against Casey Affleck, "The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford"; Philip Seymour Hoffman, "Charlie Wilson's War"; Hal Holbrook, "Into the Wild"; Tom Wilkinson, "Michael Clayton."

Joining Blanchett and Ronin in the supporting actress category were Ruby Dee for "American Gangster," Amy Ryan for "Gone Baby Gone" and Tilda Swinton for "Michael Clayton."

Snubbed along with Knightley and McAvoy was "Atonement" director Joe Wright. Besides Gilroy, the directing nominees were Paul Thomas Anderson, "There Will Be Blood"; Ethan Coen and Joel Coen, "No Country for Old Men"; Jason Reitman, "Juno"; and Julian Schnabel, "The Diving Bell and the Butterfly."

The Coens and Anderson also were nominated for writing the screenplay adaptations of their films.

The wide-open awards season had left the field up in question, and some other notable prospects were shut out, including past Oscar winner Angelina Jolie for "A Mighty Heart," Helen Bonham Carter for "Sweeney Todd," and Emile Hirsch for "Into the Wild." Sean Penn also missed out on a directing nod for "Into the Wild," as did Eddie Vedder, who was shut out in music categories.

Also left out of the Oscars completely was the hit musical "Hairspray."

The fairy-tale comedy "Enchanted" had three of the five best song nominations.

Michael Moore—who castigated President Bush over the Iraq War in his best-documentary acceptance speech for "Bowling for Columbine" in 2003—is back in Oscar contention with his health-care documentary "Sicko."

War-on-terror documentaries dominated the category, with "Sicko" up against "No End in Sight," "Operation Homecoming: Writing the Wartime Experience" and "Taxi to the Dark Side."

Even if the strike lingers, Oscar organizers insist their show will go on, with or without writers.

"We're dealing with contingencies but we're thrusting ahead. The point is, we're going to have a show, and we're going to give these incredible artists what they're due. We're going to present the Oscars on Feb. 24, and that is the important thing. Artists are giving their fellow artists a one-time event in many of their entire lives," said Sid Ganis, president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

A glimmer of hope arose late last week as the Directors Guild of America reached a deal with producers for a new contract. Many in Hollywood are counting on that deal to help resuscitate negotiations between writers and producers, who walked away from the table Dec. 7.

If the two sides settle their differences in time for the Oscars, the ceremony would become a dual celebration, honoring the best in Hollywood from the previous year and the end of a season of labor discontent that idled TV shows, delayed some movies and threw thousands of production workers into unemployment.

The tentative contract for directors addressed a key issue for writers—pay for films and TV shows that end up on the Internet and other new media. But whether the terms of the directors' deal would satisfy writers remains uncertain.

Oscar nominees are chosen in most categories by specific branches of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, such as actors, writers and directors. The academy's full membership of about 5,800 was eligible to vote for best-picture nominations and can cast ballots for the winners in all categories at the Oscar ceremony itself.

Assuming the show comes off as scheduled, ABC will broadcast the Oscars live Feb. 24 from Hollywood's Kodak Theatre. Jon Stewart—who recently resumed "The Daily Show" on Comedy Central, but without the help of his striking writers—will serve as Oscar host, a job he also filled two years ago.

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Cloverfield

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Tue thru Thurs		4:00	7:00	

Michael Stahl David, Mike Vogel
Comedy, Drama • Rated PG13 ■

Synopsis
Five young New Yorkers throw their friend a going-away party the night that a monster the size of a skyscraper descends upon the city. Their video camera documents their attempt to survive the most surreal, horrifying event of their lives.

27 Dresses

Friday		4:15	7:20	10:00
Sat and Sun	1:10	4:15	7:20	10:00
Monday	1:10	4:15	7:20	
Tue thru Thurs		4:15	7:20	

Katherine Heigl, James Marsden
Romantic Comedy • Rated PG13 ●

Mad Money

Friday		4:25	7:30	9:50
Sat and Sun	1:25	4:25	7:30	9:50
Monday	1:25	4:25	7:30	
Tue thru Thurs		4:25	7:30	

Diane Keaton, Queen Latifah
Comedy, Drama • Rated PG13 ▙

The Bucket List

Friday		4:10	7:15	9:30
Sat and Sun	1:20	4:10	7:15	9:30
Monday	1:20	4:10	7:15	
Tue thru Thurs		4:10	7:15	

Jack Nicholson, Morgan Freeman
Comedy, Drama • Rated PG13 ■

Synopsis
A long time ago, Carter Chambers' philosophy professor suggested that his students compose a "bucket list," a collection of all the things they wanted to do, see and experience in life before they kicked the bucket. But while Carter was trying to define his private dreams and plans, reality intruded.

First Sunday

Friday		4:30	7:05	9:55
Sat and Sun	1:30	4:30	7:05	9:55
Monday	1:30	4:30	7:05	
Tue thru Thurs		4:30	7:05	

Ice Cube, Regina Hall
Comedy, Drama • Rated PG13 ■

Alvin & The Chipmunks

Friday		4:05	7:10	9:35
Sat and Sun	1:05	4:05	7:10	9:35
Monday	1:05	4:05	7:10	
Tue thru Thurs		4:05	7:10	

Jason Lee, Cameron Richardson
Comedy, Family • Rated PG ▙

One Missed Call

Friday		@	7:25	9:40
Sat and Sun	@	@	7:25	9:40
Monday	@	@		
Tue thru Thurs		@		

Edward Burns, Shannyn Sossamon
Horror, Remake • Rated PG13 ▙

The Water Horse: Legend of the Deep

Friday		4:20	@	@
Sat and Sun	1:15	4:20	@	@
Monday	1:15	4:20	@	
Tue thru Thurs		4:20	@	

Emily Watson, Ben Chaplin
Family, Adventure • Rated PG ▙

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Amy Winehouse seen inhaling from pipe

NEW YORK (AP)—A video of Amy Winehouse shows the Grammy-nominated singer smoking ... something. In grainy footage obtained by British tabloid The Sun, Winehouse, 24, is seen inhaling fumes from some sort of pipe reportedly hours before showing up for husband Blake Fielder-Civil's court appearance in London on Friday.

Winehouse, who dyed her hair blond and ditched her signature black hair done up in a beehive hairdo, can be seen walking around.

She sits down and, before lighting the pipe, can be heard saying that she's "had about six Valium." On the wall behind her is a photo of Winehouse and Fielder-Civil.

Her publicist, Tracey Miller, declined to comment Tuesday.

A statement issued by Universal Records, Winehouse's record label said, "We are deeply disappointed and upset by these latest revelations and are doing everything we can to offer Amy our full support in dealing with her problems."

Winehouse—with her erratic behavior—has fed the tabloids a consistent diet of melodrama in recent months thanks to lackluster performances, reports of alleged drug use and her relationship with Fielder-Civil.

AP

Singer Amy Winehouse arrives at the MTV Movie Awards in Los Angeles, in this June 3, 2007, file photo.

Last month, the troubled singer, whose songs include "Rehab" and "You Know I'm No Good," was photographed walking outside her London home wearing a bra and jeans, with no shoes, looking upset.

Winehouse attracted yet more attention in court Friday when she blew Fielder-Civil kisses and shouted out, "I love you handsome, gorgeous one," as he was led away after facing charges of assault and conspiracy.

Fielder-Civil, 25, is accused of attacking a pub landlord and then later conspiring with him to withdraw as a witness at the trial. Fielder-Civil pleaded innocent to the charge of assault, and is expected to plead to a charge of perverting the course of justice next month.

Winehouse is nominated for six Grammy Awards including best new artist and album of the year for her acclaimed disc "Back to Black," plus record and song of the year for the brassy hit "Rehab." The awards will be presented Feb. 10 in Los Angeles.

Writers informally meet with studios

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Officials with the striking writers guild held informal talks Tuesday with Hollywood studios that could lead to the resumption of negotiations, a person familiar with the bargaining strategy said.

The talks preceded an expected guild meeting later in the day that was to address the union's next step as it seeks a new contract, said the person who was not authorized to publicly comment and asked for anonymity.

The Writers Guild of America did not immediately respond to e-mail and phone requests for comment.

Bargaining between the writers guild and the studios' trade group, the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers, broke down Dec. 7 after the alliance demanded the guild take a half-dozen issues off the table, including unionization of reality TV shows. The guild refused.

The informal meeting held Tuesday were designed to lay the groundwork for a return to formal bargaining.

The approach mirrored a series of meetings held by the Directors Guild of America and studio heads before they began formal negotiations and reached a tentative deal last week after less than a week of bargaining.

Charlie Sheen, Richards in family court

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Charlie Sheen and his ex-wife, Denise Richards, were in Los Angeles family court Tuesday. Commissioner Harvey A. Silberman took the proceedings behind closed doors before there was any discussion about the reason for the hearing. Sheen arrived with his lawyer while Richards' attorney participated by telephone.

Sheen's publicist, Stan Rosenfield, said the 42-year-old actor would have no comment.

Sheen and Richards, 36, have two daughters, 3-year-old Sam and 2-year-old Lola.

Last September, Richards asked the court to not allow Sheen to keep the children overnight.

Sheen has complained that Richards is interfering with his relationship with his daughters.

He stars in CBS' "Two and a Half Men."

Paris Hilton: Britney's a 'great mother'

NEW YORK (AP)—Paris Hilton is rooting for Britney Spears.

"I wish the best for her and I just wish everyone would leave her alone so she could live her life," the 26-year-old hotel heiress-actress tells E! News. "She's a great mother and a great girl and I really care about her."

In an interview that was to air Tuesday night, Hilton says: "She's a very sweet girl and I love her to death."

Hilton and Spears were nearly inseparable following the pop star's split from ex-husband Kevin Federline.

The tabloid magnets were photographed partying, shopping and driving in a car with Lindsay Lohan in the weeks after Spears filed for divorce from Federline in November 2006. But their whirlwind public friendship seemed to fizzle out after Spears' fans complained that Hilton was a negative influence.

Hilton

Hilton served a 23-day jail sentence in Los Angeles last June for violating probation in an alcohol-related reckless-driving case. She vowed to focus on philanthropy afterward.

Meanwhile, Spears, 26, continued to unravel in the public eye after a rough year in which she shaved her head, checked in and out of rehab and attacked a car with an umbrella.

She was taken to a Los Angeles hospital by paramedics earlier this month after police were called to her home because of a dispute involving her two sons. A court commissioner decided to keep in effect an order suspending Spears' right to visit Jayden James, 1, and Sean Preston, 2.

Ringo walks off 'Regis' over song flap

NEW YORK (AP)—Ringo Starr is known for being the amiable Beatle, but the rock star showed his tough side Tuesday when he walked off the set of "Live With Regis and Kelly" rather than cut short one of his songs.

Starr

Starr, who is promoting his new album, "Liverpool 8," planned to perform the title song with fellow rocker Dave Stewart. However, due to miscommunication between his publicist, Elizabeth Freund, and the musical director, Starr didn't realize the performance had to be 2 1/2 minutes or less, Freund told The Associated Press.

When told Tuesday morning that the performance had to be shortened, Freund said Starr tried to cut about a minute of the song's 4 minute, 15 second length, down to 3 minutes and 30 seconds. However, according to Freund, producer Michael Gelman said it had to be less than 3 minutes.

"We offered to cut back our chat time and asked them to fade or go to commercial. They were not willing to do that and Ringo was not willing to cut it further, so without a compromise we were not able to stay," Freund said in a statement to The Associated Press. "Ringo left saying, 'God bless and goodbye. We still love Regis.'"

A spokeswoman for "Regis and Kelly" disputed some of Freund's contentions. The representative, who declined to be named—citing show policy—told the AP the show's producers tried to work with Starr.

Wife's flagging libido may be caused by inattentive husband

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby

DEAR ABBY: Your advice to "Considering It in San Mateo" (Nov. 26), who asked you if it was permissible to have an affair because his wife of 34 years no longer wanted to have sex, was good, but you missed a couple of important points.

How is that man's hygiene? Does he bathe every day? Is he kind, loving and considerate of his wife during the day? Are her hormones imbalanced? Is she depressed or anemic?

Before "Considering It" goes jumping at another opportunity, he might want to consider showing affection and concern to the woman who has been with him for so long.

—BETSY IN HOUSTON

DEAR BETSY: Some readers scolded me for my response to that letter, not realizing that part of my reply was tongue-in-cheek. (No, I do NOT advocate adultery.) Others felt I didn't go far enough in my reply. Read on:

DEAR ABBY: Has "Considering It" done anything to ensure that his wife is well both physically and mentally? Could her lack of interest in sex be linked to depression, post-menopausal hormone imbalance or another physical condition?

In a loving way he should urge her to see her physician and her gynecologist. If she refuses, he should contact them and ask for advice or help. He should also take a long, hard look at how he presents himself.

Finally, he might speak with a counselor, because lack of sexual activity can signal problems elsewhere in their relationship. Marriages take work—even those that have lasted 34 years.

—SUSAN IN NEW WINDSOR, N.Y.

DEAR ABBY: I am a nurse-practitioner, and for years I have heard women in their 40s and 50s complain about loss of libido. In our area, a group of gynecologists has begun offering bioidentical hormone replacement. This term refers to hormones that are exactly the same in structure and function as those produced by the human body.

My husband had also quoted the article regarding "having regular sex would improve your health." Do these men really think we are happy with symptoms like hot flashes, fatigue, weight gain, etc.? When I started experiencing symptoms similar to your reader's wife, I decided to see for myself. It has been several months since I started bioidentical hormone treatment, and things have improved considerably.

—SMILING IN MIDDLETOWN, DEL.

DEAR ABBY: The writer's wife may have a medical condition such as high cholesterol or high blood pressure, requiring medication that decreases libido. She could be depressed, which affects interest in sex. Menopause can also cause significantly reduced sex drive. Some hormone replacement medicines may help with this. These conditions can be evaluated and treated by her doctor or OB/GYN.

The man should also evaluate the way he treats his wife. Men often remind their wives that they desire sex, but forget that women need romance and stimulation. Perhaps he should try a different approach?

Before stepping out of the marriage, with or without her permission, he should consider these possibilities. Infidelity is destructive for the family and personal psyche.

—NURSE-PRACTITIONER, NEWBERRY, FLA.

DEAR ABBY: There are some great medications on the market for women with low or no libido. My husband suggested it to me—very nicely—and I promised to check it out. I did, and, oh my goodness, we're acting like teenagers again!

—ONE HOT OLD LADY, AND I DON'T MEAN HOT FLASHES, GLENDALE, ARIZ.

■ ■ ■

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

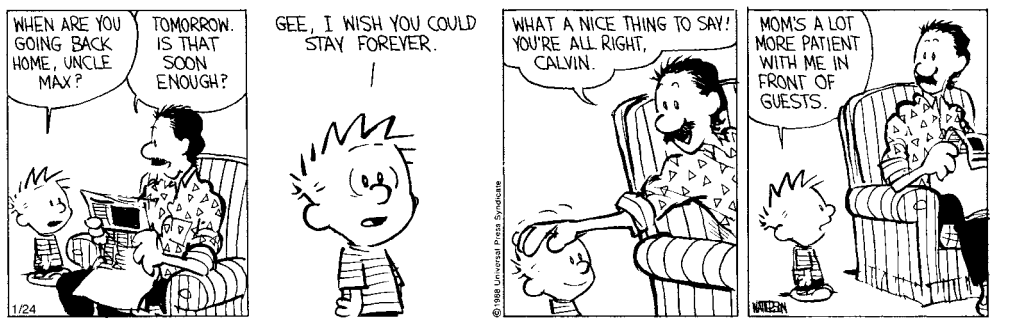
■ ■ ■

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send a business-sized, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for $6 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


WHEN ARE YOU GOING BACK HOME, UNCLE MAX?
TOMORROW. IS THAT SOON ENOUGH?
GEE, I WISH YOU COULD STAY FOREVER.
WHAT A NICE THING TO SAY! YOU'RE ALL RIGHT, CALVIN.
MOM'S A LOT MORE PATIENT WITH ME IN FRONT OF GUESTS.
1/24
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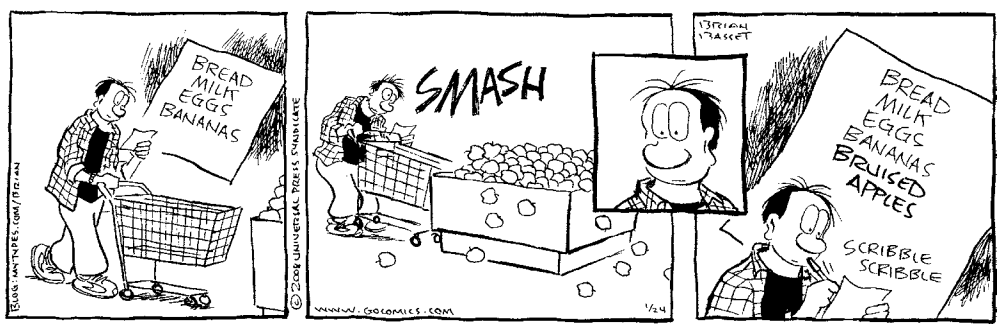
Garfield®

By Jim Davis

WOULD YOU LIKE SOME FRESH GROUND PEPPER ON YOUR LETTUCE LEAF?
GRIND GRIND GRIND GRIND
1-24
© 2008 PAWS, INC. All Rights Reserved.
www.garfield.com
Distributed by Universal Press Syndicate

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

THIS ROOM IS TOO COLD! YOU NEED SOME NEW MAGAZINES IN YOUR WAITING ROOM!
THIS TABLE IS UNCOMFORTABLE! AND WHAT'S WITH THE SAPPY MUZAK PLAYING ON YOUR RADIO?!
LIST HIS CONDITION AS "CRITICAL."
1/24
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www.gocomics.com

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Request
4 ABC daytime show, with "The"
8 Royal Norse name
12 Wish undone
13 Farm fraction
14 Singer Suzanne
15 Acuity
17 "My Name Is —"
18 Turf
19 Everlasting
21 Religious retreat
24 Scale member
25 Ultra-modernist
26 Felon's flight
28 Undraped
32 Nurse
34 Trot
36 Gilpin of "Frasier"
37 Finished
39 Dog's "dog"
41 Away from WSW
42 Symbol of intrigue
44 Shut tightly
46 Not union sanctioned
50 Blond shade
51 Bloodhound's clue
52 Memento
56 Crazy
57 Therefore
58 Country consisting of seven sheikdoms (Abbr.)
59 Go postal
60 "My Heart Will Go On" singer
61 Abner's adjective

DOWN
1 Torah holder
2 Seek restitution
3 Dutch dog breed
4 Destructive one
5 Bar supply
6 Gaelic
7 Adam and Mae
8 Conceal partially
9 Jack Sprat's fare
10 Taj Mahal city
11 Eden event
16 Postal creed word
20 Long period
21 Initial chip
22 Witnessed
23 Army rank (Abbr.)
27 Unruly hairdo
29 Rebuke severely
30 Sea eagle
31 Conked out
33 Morning moisture
35 Petrol
38 Year end abbr.
40 Arm
43 Prepared a casserole
45 Foolish one
46 CNN's Blitzer
47 Pedestal occupant
48 Places
49 Actress Garr
53 Id counterpart
54 Chiang — -shek
55 Slithery fish

Solution time: 25 mins.

S	I	P		D	A	N	A		C	R	O	P		
C	O	O		O	D	O	R		L	I	R	A		
A	W	E		M	O	R	T	G	A	G	E	S		
B	A	M	B	I			S	U	M					
			E	N	O	L		M	O	G	U	L		
M	O	R	E	O	V	E	R		R	O	P	E		
A	P	E		S	U	M	A	C		E	T	A		
S	E	A	M		M	O	R	R	I	S	O	N		
S	C	R	E	W		N	E	A	R					
			S	O	S		T	A	B	O	O			
M	O	R	S	E	C	O	D	E		U	R	N		
O	A	H	U		A	D	A	R		S	E	C		
P	R	O	P		M	E	D	S		H	O	E		

Yesterday's answer 1-24

1	2	3	■	4	5	6	7	■	8	9	10	11
12			■	13				■	14			
15			16					■	17			
■	■	18			■	19		20				
21	22				23	■	24			■	■	■
25			■	26		27	■	28		29	30	31
32			33	■	34		35	■	36			
37				38	■	39		40	■	41		
■	■	■	42		43	■	44		45			
46	47	48				49	■	50			■	■
51				■	52		53				54	55
56				■	57				■	58		
59				■	60				■	61		

STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Mischa Barton, 22; Tatyana Ali, 29; Mary Lou Retton, 40; Yakov Smirnoff, 57

Happy Birthday: You will have to toss around several options this year. Don't let anyone interfere in the final decisions you make. Look, see and do what's best for you and you will excel. You can never make everyone around you happy but your own happiness will please the people who care about you most. Your numbers are 3, 14, 18, 21, 33, 47

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): Question what's going on rather than taking someone's word. Protect your own assets and position—by overreacting or letting someone else take the lead, you will not do yourself justice. Stand tall and do not fear the unknown. ✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Doors will open if you talk to someone who can share information with you. Sometimes you have to help yourself. Dealing with children, older friends or relatives may be a burden; get your own responsibilities out of the way first. ✪✪✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): Everything will be moving fast and you will have to be prepared to multitask if you want to stay on top of things. Love will find its way to your door and creative pursuits will turn your home decor into a masterpiece of comfort and class. ✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Strive for perfection. An emotional matter can be cleared up if you are serious about your intentions and concerns. Don't exaggerate and you will get to the bottom of things more quickly. ✪✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): You will be put in an awkward position if you promised someone something that you cannot deliver. Money matters may appear to be better than they actually are. Do not overspend on unnecessary items. ✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): Don't offer information if it will hurt someone. Keep things to yourself for now. In the long run, you will discover that you really didn't have a good view of a situation involving others. ✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): You have so much going for you that it would be a shame to miss anything that can lead to a better you and a better position. Love may be questionable due to the number of choices available; proceed with caution. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Get active and be smart about what you say and do. You shouldn't be sharing all your secrets. Expect others to take advantage or disagree with you. Don't become emotional. ✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): You love to experience new places and learn new things, so get a move on and travel far and wide. Everything you learn will contribute to something that you will do in the not-so-distant future. Change is upon you and being creative in your decisions will bring good results. ✪✪✪✪

CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Keep things in perspective. If you let your emotions take over, you will be sure to make a mistake. Someone is likely to try and talk you out of something you want to pursue and, if you let that happen, you will have regrets. Follow your dreams. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): You'll be pulled in more than one direction emotionally. Try to look at the big picture and sort matters through methodically. If you can be rational and use your creative imagination, you will come up with a good solution. ✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): Don't meddle and you will spare yourself a lot of grief. You will waste valuable time that you should be putting to better use. Someone will dump responsibilities in your lap that don't belong to you—be quick to say no. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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Birthday Baby: You have exquisite insight and are solid, steady and ready to take on whatever comes your way. You have vision and are an inspiration to your peers.

Eugenia's Web sites: **astroadvice.com** *for fun,* **eugenialast.com** *for confidential consultations*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green

3			8			5	6	9
				9		4		
	4		1			8		
					6		5	
				7				
	7		9					
		5			8		1	
		4		6				
2	9	6			3			8

Difficulty Level ★★★ 1/24

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

4	2	9	3	8	7	1	6	5
3	5	7	2	6	1	8	9	4
1	8	6	5	9	4	7	2	3
9	7	8	6	4	2	3	5	1
2	1	3	8	5	9	6	4	7
5	6	4	1	7	3	9	8	2
7	9	5	4	3	6	2	1	8
6	4	1	7	2	8	5	3	9
8	3	2	9	1	5	4	7	6

Difficulty Level ★★★ 1/23

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

JANITORIAL CLEANING CONTRACTS **Solution: 10 letters**

R	P	R	S	C	D	S	W	E	E	P	B	W	A	L
S	E	N	I	H	C	A	M	T	X	U	(D)	(E)	(A)	(L)
C	E	S	E	A	X	O	I	A	I	P	T	N	Y	A
I	K	L	T	I	P	W	R	L	L	S	I	E	L	C
F	P	A	N	R	A	E	D	P	Y	L	M	R	K	L
I	U	G	Y	S	I	I	R	M	O	L	I	R	E	M
C	Y	R	T	L	N	C	W	E	A	R	L	G	E	A
E	L	E	N	G	R	A	T	T	Q	N	A	I	W	T
P	T	E	E	I	L	U	I	I	U	L	S	T	T	E
S	S	M	I	L	T	P	O	Z	O	C	O	V	E	R
C	O	E	S	E	S	U	O	H	T	N	P	H	G	I
H	C	N	L	O	C	A	R	P	E	T	S	S	R	A
O	I	T	H	B	Y	C	N	E	G	A	I	I	A	L
R	O	O	M	S	A	E	R	A	W	N	D	G	L	S
E	T	O	N	O	I	T	U	T	I	T	S	N	I	G

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Agency, Agreement, Areas, Building, Call, Carpets, Chairs, Chore, Corporate, Costly, Cover, Daily, Deal, Disposal, Expire, Furniture, Help, Home, Hospital, Hourly, Houses, Institution, Large, Legal, Limit, Machines, Materials, Note, Quote, Renew, Repair, Restrictions, Rooms, Sign, Small, Specific, Sweep, Tables, Template, Terms, Upkeep, Walls, Wash, Waste, Waxing, Weekly

Yesterday's Answer: Duplicate

WONDERWORD offers the **"Book of Celebrities,"** for $5.95 each (US funds only) payable to Universal Press Syndicate plus $3 postage for the first book order, $1 p&h for each additional book. Send to WONDERWORD, 4520 Main St., Kansas City, Mo. 64111 or call toll-free, 1-800-255-6734, ext. 6688. Order online at upuzzles.com.

CLASSIFIED ADS

CLASSIFIEDS RATES AND POLICIES

Saipan Tribune's Classifieds Section gives you the right exposure without hurting your pockets. Stretch your dollar and get results.

CLASSIFIED ADS

Saipan Tribune also offers a Super Saver Package—a complete 7-day run on both print and online edition, for as low as $25 per 3 liner ad for garage sales, apartment rentals, help wanted, auto and more. You can choose from any of below packages that fits your budget.

ADS (7DAYS)	COMBO (PRINT AND ONLINE)
• 3-Liner	$25
• 5-Liner	$35
• 3-Liner with picture	$45
• 5-Liner with picture	$55

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

As added service to our valued customers, you may now submit all your JVA placements for announcement/publication in *Saipan Tribune's* print and online edition and KZMI/KCNM at the same time. No more worries of having to go to two different locations every time you need to place job vacancy announcements. Special rates are available for JVA customers under this arrangement.

Print*	
• 1st position	$10
• 2nd position	$3
• Succeeding positions	$1

LOWER RATES! Effective Feb. 3, 2007

Combo (Print and Online)*	
• 1st position	$13
• 2nd position	$4
• Succeeding positions	$2

Radio (KCNM/KZMI)	
• Up to 6 positions	$5
• More than 6 positions	$10

*These rates apply to all vacancy announcements that include corresponding benefits and which announcements are all under the same company name.

ADVERTISING DEADLINE

Classified Ads

Ads must be submitted before 12 noon 2 days prior to publication date

Job Vacancy Announcements

Monday Through Friday Issues: All ads placed before 12 noon will come out the next publication date.

Saturday And Sunday Issues:

- *Saipan Tribune:* All ads placed Friday before 12 noon will come out Saturday issue and anything placed thereafter will be published on either Sunday or Monday issues.
- KCNM/KZMI: All ads placed on Friday (9am to 5pm) will be for Monday's radio announcement.

CANCELLATION

Classified Ads

Cancellations should be made before 12 noon of the day prior to date of publication.

Job Vacancy Announcements

Cancellations should be made before 12 noon of the day prior to date of publication.

REFUNDS

Refunds will only be made if cancellation deadlines are met. No refunds will be made once ad is already printed.

CHECK YOUR ADS

Saipan Tribune will not be responsible for errors after the first day of publication. Errors should be called in before noon of the issue date. *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

ADVERTISING POLICY

All advertising in the *Saipan Tribune* are subject to applicable rate sheet, copies of which are available from the Advertising Sales Department (please call 235-8747, 235-2769 or 235-6397). All ads will be subject to approval prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit, refuse, reject or cancel any ad at any time. Also, Saipan Tribune reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

FOR RENT RESIDENTIAL

Apartment room for rent: Fully furnished 1 brm, T/B, 24-hr water $210/month, near Conwood | Tel. 287-1372, 235-6748

FOR RENT RESIDENTIAL

Apartment Room for Rent
2 bed room $230.00, Koblerville.
Contact: 288-0728.

FOR RENT RESIDENTIAL

2 br furnished apartment w/ laundry facility. Beach Road. Close to beach walking path. $425/mo. Call 483-1974.

NEW Rattan Furniture
FOR SALE
Expensive material
Call 235-4791,
433-9616, 285-7446

IMMEDIATE HIRING
YCO CORPORATION
WAITRESS • BAR TENDER • COOK
Interested applicants may submit their Resume/Application at 3rd Floor, Yumul Bldg. Garapan, Saipan
Note: No Phone Inquiries

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

1 HOUSEWORKER (TH 4596)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: ER provide housing; ER provide food & medical reimbursement. Contact: Mark B. Hanson @233-8600.

1 MASON (TH 4597)
Salary:$3.55-$4.50/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; employee provided food; workers compensation & medical insurance provided by employer. Contact: ECM International Corp. dba ECM Construction @235-9294.

1 VIDEO SALES CLERK (TH 4598)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self provided food; transportation self provided; medical & workmen's compensation. Contact: E.W.G.E. Corporation dba Kevin's Video II @235-6988/234-6988/256-6988/235-6986.

1 DISPATCHER (TH 4599)
Salary:$3.05-$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation provided. Contact: Saipan Cool Water & Ice, Inc. dba Saipan Cool Water & Ice @888-0379.

1 WASHER (TH 4600)
Salary:$3.05-$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation provided. Contact: Saipan Cool Water & Ice, Inc. dba Saipan Cool Water & Ice @888-0379.

2 DELIVERY WORKER (TH 4601)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation provided. Contact: Saipan Cool Water & Ice, Inc. dba Saipan Cool Water & Ice @888-0379.

1 TOUR MANAGER (TH 4602)
Salary:$650.00-$800.00/monthly. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation provided. Contact: Pil Corporation dba Kan Tour @483-1234.

1 GENERAL MANAGER (TH 4603)
Salary:$650.00-$1,800.00/monthly. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation provided. Contact: Jaeyoon Corporation dba BSA @483-9130.

1 TOUR MANAGER (TH 4604)
Salary:$650.00-$1,800.00/monthly. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation provided. Contact: Korea Tourism, Inc. dba Koreana Tours Bureau @233-3004.

1 GENERAL MANAGER (TH 4605)
Salary:$650.00-$1,800.00/monthly. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation provided. Contact: Korea Tourism, Inc. dba Koreana Tours Bureau @233-3004.

1 COOK (TH 4606)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Workmen's compensation & medical. Contact: Manju P. Hom dba Java Joes @235-5098.

1 F&B MANAGER (TH 4607)
Salary:$6.91/hour. Benefits: Self arrange housing; self provide food; medical & workmen's compensation. Contact: Manju P. Hom dba Java Joes @235-5098.

3 BARISTA (WAITRESS OR WAITER) (TH 4608)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arrange housing; self provide food; medical & workmen's compensation. Contact: Manju P. Hom dba Java Joes @235-5098.

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MARIANAS PUBLIC LAND TRUST
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
NOTICE OF REGULAR MEETING

Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 11, The Open Government Act of 1992, the Marianas Public Land Trust have scheduled a Board of Trustees Regular Meeting for **Friday, January 25, 2008 beginning at 6:00 PM at the NMIRF Conference Room, NMI Retirement Fund Building Saipan, MP.**

The following agenda is hereby established:

I. PRELIMINARIES
- Call to Order
- Roll Call
- Adoption of Agenda
- Adoption of Minutes
- Election of Officers

II. CONSULTANT REPORTS
- Legal Counsel Report*
  - NMHC Loan Matters
  - Administration of Mortgage Loan Portfolio
- Investment Consultant Report
  - Flash Reports – December 2007
  - Performance Reports Review
  - International Money Manager Review
- Board Consultant Report
  - Financial Statements – December 2007

III. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT
- Administrative Matters

IV. OLD BUSINESS

V. NEW BUSINESS

VI. EXECUTIVE SESSION
At anytime during this scheduled meeting, the Board of Trustees may be required to enter into Executive Session to discuss matters deemed privileged and confidential.

VII. MISCELLANEOUS

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

*It is anticipated that the following matters will be discussed under Executive Session in its entirety.

In accordance with Public Law 8-41, additional agenda items may be added to the above listing only by the recorded vote of the majority of the trustee governing body.

All interested persons are welcome to attend and to submit written and oral testimony on the above agenda items.

/s/ **Alvaro A. Santos**
Chairman, Board of Trustees

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NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Position: **Manager, Mortgage Credit** **Opening Date: January 19, 2008**
Closing Date: February 20, 2008

Starting Salary: PL 35/01 to PL 35/12 ($28,808 to $49,266 per annum)

Job Location: NMHC Central Office, Garapan, Saipan, MP 96950

Detailed job description, qualification requirements and other information may be picked up, together with NMHC's employment application form, during regular working hours at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan during regular working hours, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except CNMI holidays.

All applicants must complete and submit the NMHC Employment Application Form together with required documents that are listed in the Employment Application Package. Failure to provide the required documents will result in automatic disqualification. NMHC and all its properties are drug-free zones; therefore, selected applicant will be subject to pre-employment drug screening.

Applicants are requested to submit their original application and supporting documents to the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan, no later than 4:30 p.m., Wednesday, February 20, 2008, **OR MAILED AND POSTMARKED** no later than February 20, 2008, to the Corporate Director, Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, P. O. Box 500514, Saipan, MP 96950.

It is the policy of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) that the merit system will be applied and administered according to the principle of equal opportunity for all citizens and nationals as defined by its personnel regulations and the Northern Marianas Commonwealth Constitution regardless of age, race, sex, religion, political affiliation or belief, marital status, disability or place of origin.

For inquiries, please contact Edith C. Fejeran, Office Manager at (670) 234-9447/7689 or by email to ecfejeran@nmhc.gov.mp NMHC is a fair housing agency and an equal opportunity provider, lender and employer.

/s/ **JOSHUA T. SASAMOTO**
Corporate Director

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

1 HOUSEWORKER (TH 4609)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical expense. Contact: Juan L. Ada dba House Worker @234-5036 or 287-5799.

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1 PLUMBER (TH 4610)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical expense & worker compensation. Contact: Juana S. Muna dba House Rental @235-1505.

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1 FARMER (TH 4611)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical expense. Contact: Juana S. Muna dba Farmer @235-1305 or 287-5799 (Mary Ada).

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1 HOUSE WORKER (TH 4612)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical expense. Contact: Juana S. Muna dba House Worker @235-1305/287-5799.

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1 (NURSERY/DAY CARE SCHOOL-ATTENDANT) MANAGER (TH 4613)
Salary:$1,000.00-$1,500.00/monthly. Benefits: Self arrange housing; self provide food; medical expense & workman compensation. Contact: Chunlan Wen Cabrera dba Ever Green Day Care Center @235-2798.

1 GENERAL MAINTENANCE REPAIRER (TH 4614)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arrange housing; self provide food; medical expense & workman compensation. Contact: Chunlan Wen Cabrera dba Ever Green Day Care Center @235-2798.

2 NURSERY/DAY CARE SCHOOL ATTENDANT (TH 4615)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arrange housing; self provide food; medical expense & workman compensation. Contact: Chunlan Wen Cabrera dba Ever Green Day Care Center @235-2798.

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1 ASSISTANT TIRE REPAIRER (TH 4616)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Workmen's compensation & medical expense. Contact: Phillip A. Fejeran Jr. dba J&J Tire Shop @235-1283.

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1 BLDG. MAINTENANCE REPAIRER (TH 4617)
Salary:$3.55-$3.75/hour. Benefits: Self provide housing; self arranged food; medical & workmen's compensation provided. Contact: AA Enterprises, Inc. @322-4447.

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1 SCUBA DIVING INSTRUCTOR (TH 4618)
Salary:$3.05/hour. Benefits: Medical expense & workers compensation employer provided. Contact: Marianas Seas Adventures Inc. @233-0577.

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2 COOK (TH 4619)
Salary:$3.05/hour. Benefits: Workers compensation & medical expenses company provided. Contact: J.T.M. Corporation @233-5436.

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1 SCUBA DIVING INSTRUCTOR (TH 4620)
Salary:$650.00-$800.00/monthly. Benefits: Medical expenses & workers compensation employer provided. Contact: Aqua Del Rey Saipan, Inc. @233-7040.

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1 (MARINE) SPORTS INSTRUCTOR (TH 4621)
Salary:$634.40-$1,000.00/monthly. Benefits: Workers compensation & medical expenses company provided. Contact: Mermaid Saipan Ent., Co., Ltd. @322-0563.

---

1 MECHANICAL ENGINEER (TH 4622)
Salary:$1,700.00/monthly. Benefits: Workers compensation & medical expenses company provided. Contact: Eaulands CNMI Inc. @322-0018.

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1 CIVIL ENGINEER (TH 4623)
Salary:$1,800.00/monthly. Benefits: Workers compensation & medical expenses company provided. Contact: Sanki Company Ltd. @233-3296.

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2 BUILDING MAINTENANCE REPAIRER (TH 4624)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self arranged food; medical & workman's compensation provided. Contact: Martha's Retail Shop, Inc. @234-9774.

2 COMMERCIAL CLEANER (TH 4625)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self arranged food; medical & workman's compensation provided. Contact: Martha's Retail Shop, Inc. @234-9774.

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1 ELECTRONIC TECHNICIAN (TH 4626)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; medical; surety bond; & worksmen compensation. Contact: ASG Corporation dba Elite Printing @288-6465/2677.

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1 HOUSEWORKER (TH 4627)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; & workmen's compensation. Contact: Pamela C. Sablan @235-9493.

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1 SALES ASSOCIATES (TH 4628)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arrange housing; self provide food; medical expense & workmen compensation. Contact: EQ Construction Corp. dba Our Daily Bread Bakery @234-8828/234-8827.

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1 LAUNDRY WORKER (TH 4629)
Salary:$3.55-$3.85/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; medical insurance; workers compensation; sick leave & vacation leave. Contact: Tropical Laundry & Linen Supply Co., Ltd. @322-3077/8.

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5 WAITRESS/WAITER (TH 4630)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: $100.00/housing; self provided food; medical & worksmens compensation. Contact: RPCF, Inc. @234-9127.

3 CARPENTER (TH 4631)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: $100.00/housing; self provided food; medical & worksmens compensation. Contact: RPCF, Inc. @234-9127.

1 ELECTRICIAN (TH 4632)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: $100.00/housing; self provided food; medical & worksmens compensation. Contact: RPCF, Inc. @234-9127.

9 MASON (TH 4633)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: $100.00/monthly housing; self provided food; medical & worksmens compensation. Contact: RPCF, Inc. @234-9127.

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1 FOOD SERVER (TH 4634)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; workers compensation & medical. Contact: Theresa R. Dela Cruz dba Cruz Catering Services @235-1679.

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1 ELECTRICIAN (TH 4635)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & worksmen compensation. Contact: GPPC, Inc. @234-7900.

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1 ACCOUNTANT (TH 4636)
Salary:$3.05-$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation provided. Contact: Blue Ocean, LLC dba Blue Ocean @483-3493.

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1 WAITER/WAITRESS (TH 4637)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Employee provided housing; employee provided food; workmen's compensation & medical. Contact: Piao Investment Corp. @285-9308.

1 JANITOR (TH 4638)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Employee provided housing; employee provided food; workmen's compensation & medical. Contact: Piao Investment Corp. @285-9308.

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1 GEN. MAINTENANCE REPAIRER (TH 4639)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Employee provided housing; employee provided food; workmen's compensation & medical. Contact: ISA Enterprises Inc. dba Beau Global Services @285-9308.

1 GEN. MAINTENANCE REPAIRER (TH 4639)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Employee provided housing; employee provided food; workmen's compensation & medical. Contact: ISA Enterprises Inc. dba Beau Global Services @285-9308.

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1 CONTROLLER (TH 4640)
Salary:$700.00-$1,500.00/monthly. Benefits: $10.00-$50.00/gasoline monthly; $50.00-$350.00/housing monthly; workers compensation & medical expenses company provided. Contact: HIS Saipan, Inc. @234-7053.

1 TOUR COORDINATOR (TH 4641)
Salary:$700.00-$2,000.00/monthly. Benefits: $10.00-$50.00/gasoline monthly; $50.00-$350.00/housing monthly; workers compensation & medical expenses company provided. Contact: HIS Saipan, Inc. @234-7053.

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1 SALES REPRESENTATIVE (TH 4642)
Salary:$3.55-$4.11/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; medical benefits & worksmen compensation. Contact: Transamerica (Saipan) Corp. @234-1629.

1 SALES SUPERVISOR (TH 4643)
Salary:$3.55-$5.33/hour. Free housing; medical benefits & workmens compensation. Contact: Transamerica (Saipan) Corp. @234-1629.

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1 SPORTS INSTRUCTOR (TH 4652)
Salary:$4.17/hour. Benefits: Free housing except utility; workers compensation; & medical bill is company provided. Contact: Big Boy Marine Sports, Inc. dba Big Boy'z II Marine @234-3358.

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1 ACCOUNTANT (TH 4653)
Salary:$650.00-$2,600.00/monthly. Benefits: Workers compensation by the employer; transportation to and from the job site by the employer; housing by the employer & medical at 80% by the employer and 20% bye the employee. Contact: Triple L Corporation dba Pacific Power House Co., @322-6183.

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1 WAITER/WAITRESS (TH 4654)
Salary:$3.05-$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation provided. Contact: China Yanbian Frgn. Eco. & Tech. Coop. Corp. dba Seoul One Restaurant/Shinsen Restaurant @233-1900/233-1600.

3 COOK (TH 4655)
Salary:$3.05-$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation provided. Contact: China Yanbian Frgn. Eco. & Tech. Coop. Corp. dba Seoul One Restaurant/Shinsen Restaurant @233-1900/233-1600.

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1 COMMERCIAL CLEANER (TH 4656)
Salary:$3.05/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation provided. Contact: Saipan Magellan, Inc. dba Apple's Bar & Restaurant @285-7890.

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1 HOUSEWORKER (TH 4657)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: $100.00/deductible housing; $50.00/deductible food & medical provided. Contact: Manuela A. Babauta @323-6550.

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1 GROUND MAINTENANCE (TH 4658)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self arranged food; medical provided & workman compensation. Contact: Juan L. Babauta @323-6550.

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1 CARPENTER (TH 4659)
Salary:$3.75/hour. Benefits: Workman's compensation & medical. Contact: Jesus R.A. Sonoda dba Chamorro House Enterprises @233-2600.

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1 BLDG. MAINTENANCE REPAIRER (TH 4660)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self provided food; medical & workers compensation provided. Contact: Wang Jing Corporation dba Pacific Handicrafts @483-0527/235-8700.

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1 COMMERCIAL CLEANER (TH 4661)
Salary:$3.05-$3.50/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self provided food; medical benefits & workers compensation. Contact: RPM Corporation dba Reliable Gen. Contractor Reliable Gen. Maint. Service @234-3763/7763.

1 STEEL WORKER (TH 4662)
Salary:$3.05-$3.50/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self provided food; medical benefits & workers compensation. Contact: RPM Corporation dba Reliable Gen. Contractor Reliable Gen. Maint. Service @234-3763/7763.

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1 BARTENDER (TH 4663)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Housing provided; self arrange food. Contact: Milne & Reyes Enterprises dba Joe's Bar & Grill @235-6657.

2 COOK (TH 4664)
Salary: $3.55/hour. Benefits: Housing provided; self arrange food; medical & workmen's compensation. Contact: Milne & Reyes Enterprises dba Joe's Bar & Grill @235-6657.

1 COOK HELPER (TH 4665)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Housing provided; self arrange food; medical & workmen's compensation. Contact: Milne & Reyes Enterprises dba Joe's Bar & Grill @235-6657.

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1 ELECTRICAL ENGINEER (TH 4666)
Salary:$1,250.00/monthly. Benefits: Self provide food; medical provided & workers compensation coverage. Contact: GTS Enterprises, Inc. dba GTS Construction @234-8803/04.

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1 COMMERCIAL CLEANER (TH 4667)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Workers compensation & medical coverage. Contact: Juan T. Guerrero & Assoc., Inc. @234-8803/04.

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1 BUILDING MAINTENANCE REPAIRER (TH 4668)
Salary:$4.00/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; medical & workmen's compensation employer provided. Contact: Gualo Rai Center, Inc. @234-6552.

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1 AUTOCADD DRAFTMAN (TH 4669)
Salary:$10.00/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; medical & workmen's compensation employer provided. Contact: Meridian Land Surveying, LLC @234-6552.

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1 SALES (MANAGER) (TH 4670)
Salary:$4.50/hour. Benefits: Free housing; free food; medical coverage expenses & workers compensation. Contact: ADPIA Communication Inc. dba Pink House @235-4499.

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1 HOUSEWORKER (TH 4671)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: $100.00/housing monthly deduction; $100.00/food monthly deduction; medical coverage expenses & workers compensation. Contact: Joe and Corazon Ada @285-6611.

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1 DRESS MAKER (TH 4672)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arrange housing; self arrange food; medical coverage expenses & workers compensation. Contact: Perla Marquez dba Holiday Shop @233-6910.

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Ivanovic knocks Venus out at Aussie Open

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)—Venus Williams followed her sister Serena out of the Australian Open in the quarterfinals, both in losses to Serbian players. Venus went down 7-6 (3), 6-4 to fourth-seeded Ana Ivanovic on Wednesday, a day after defending champion Serena lost to No. 3 Jelena Jankovic.

Ivanovic, who had never taken a set off Williams in four previous contests, is into the semifinals for the third time at a Grand Slam and next faces first-timer Daniela Hantuchova, who beat Agnieszka Radwanska 6-2, 6-2 in Wednesday's other quarterfinal.

Jankovic will meet No. 5 Maria Sharapova in Thursday's semifinals. Sharapova ended top-ranked Justine Henin's 32-match winning streak with a 6-4, 6-0 win Tuesday.

Hantuchova had not been to the second week of a Grand Slam tournament since her quarterfinal exits at three consecutive majors, ending with a loss to Venus Williams in the Australian Open in 2003.

"It feels great. I kept fighting for every point, even in matches I wasn't playing very well," she said. "I kept believing I could do it, and here I am."

Williams was in the second week at Melbourne Park for the first time since '03, when she lost to her sister in the final.

She squandered a break in the second set and had double-break point in the last game before Ivanovic reeled off four straight points to advance.

Serena Williams slumped 6-3, 6-4 on Tuesday to Jankovic, who reached the semifinals at Melbourne Park for the first time and only the third time in a major.

Serena Williams was unseeded and ranked No. 81 when she made her stunning run to a third Australian and eighth Grand Slam title here 12 months ago, punctuating that with an emphatic 6-1, 6-2 win over Sharapova in one of the most lopsided Grand Slam finals.

That loss stung Sharapova, who wants to make amends this year.

"Even though I beat Justine, it's definitely not over," she said. "I still have a lot of business to take care of."

Sharapova, who struggled with a shoulder problem for most of last season, started returning to her best at the WTA championships in November before losing in three sets to Henin in 3 hours, 24 minutes—among the dozen longest women's tour matches in the Open era.

She turned the tables in only 1:38 on Tuesday, inflicting the first 6-0 set on Henin since 2002.

"I really felt like I was in a bubble," No. 5 Sharapova said. "I think it was one of the most consistent matches where I did all the things I wanted to do, and I did them correctly from the beginning to the end ... and just played the way I can play."

Henin, who struggled with her serve and was broken five times by Sharapova, said she had a minor concern over a lingering knee injury but put the end of her winning streak down as an inevitability.

"It's very hard to be at your best level all the time," she said. "I'll have to think about that and build again for the future."

Sharapova will be looking back for lessons to take into the semis against Jankovic, her old tennis academy pal.

"Ever since the juniors we've always played really tough and we've always battled it out, and it's great to see her in the semis," Sharapova said. "It's great we're playing together."

Another Serbian player has a chance of making the semis, with No. 3 Novak Djokovic playing David Ferrer of Spain in the men's semifinals.

Defending champion Roger Federer goes against No. 12 James Blake in the night match.

Blake is 0-7 against Federer, who beat him in the 2006 U.S. Open quarterfinals.

But he's taking heart from Federer's last two matches, when he was taken to 10-8 in the fifth set against Serbia's Janko Tipsarevic and had to save set points against Tomas Berdych.

No. 2 Rafael Nadal, the only player to beat Federer at the last 10 Grand Slams, advanced to his first Australian Open semifinal with a 7-5, 6-3, 6-1 win over No. 24 Jarkko Nieminen of Finland.

"Maybe I wasn't playing my best match, my best tennis today, but it was enough," the three-time French Open champion said. "It's a good moment for me, first semifinals on hard court, Grand Slam."

He will play 22-year-old Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, who beat No. 14 Mikhail Youzhny 7-5, 6-0, 7-6 (6) late Tuesday.

The 38th-ranked Tsonga has only played four previous majors due to a combination of back, shoulder and abdominal injuries and never won a title at the elite level, but has already upset No. 9 Andy Murray and No. 8 Richard Gasquet so far at Melbourne Park with his high-energy game.

After an impressive first four rounds, Serena Williams looked sluggish and her serve misfired against Jankovic, contributing to seven service breaks.

She had time to reflect on the singles loss when she combined with Venus in a 3-6, 6-4, 6-2 doubles quarterfinal loss to Chinese pair Yan Zi and Zheng Jie.

"I think that I went crazy, maybe, and I made a lot of mistakes. I didn't really play the game I wanted to play," Williams said, adding that she had some physical issues she didn't want to elaborate on. "I don't like to make excuses. We won't discuss those.

"I lost because Jelena played better than me and I made too many errors—I think regardless, the match was on my racket, and I gave it away."

Jankovic has been hampered by a thigh problem since helping Serbia to the Hopman Cup final, where it lost to the Serena Williams-led United States.

She needed treatment during her first-round match here, when she had to save three match points, and again against Williams.

"I'm like a wounded animal. I still keep going," she said, adding for emphasis that she had a point to prove following a fourth-round loss to Williams here last year.

"Getting revenge, it feels so good," Jankovic said.

Serbia's Ana Ivanovic reacts to a point win as she plays Venus Williams of the United States during their Women's singles quarter final match at the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne, Australia, Wednesday, Jan. 23, 2008.

AP

Steve Nash's season-high 37 leads Suns past Bucks, 114-105

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Steve Nash scored 15 of his season-high 37 points in the fourth quarter, leading the Phoenix Suns past the Milwaukee Bucks 114-105 in the NBA on Tuesday.

The Suns, who have the NBA's second-best record behind Boston, rallied from 11 points down to become the first Western Conference team to notch 30 victories. Phoenix has won four straight.

Amare Stoudemire added 19 points, including 10 in the final period, and grabbed 12 rebounds, while Raja Bell scored eight of his 19 points in the final quarter.

Grant Hill was also back in the Suns' starting lineup, less than two weeks after undergoing an appendectomy. He had eight points in 27 minutes after missing seven games recovering from the surgery on Jan. 9.

Michael Redd led the Bucks with 28 points, but scored only two in the fourth quarter. Andrew Bogut added 19 points and 13 rebounds, and Bobby Simmons had 15 points.

Kings 128, Nets 94

At Sacramento, California, Ron Artest scored 27 points, Kevin Martin added 19 and Mike Bibby scored all 15 of his in the first half to lead finally healthy Sacramento to its third straight victory over New Jersey.

The three played their first game together last Wednesday in Toronto, and Bibby and Artest joined Martin back in the starting lineup for the first time against New Jersey. They notched the Kings' most lopsided win of the season.

Vince Carter led the way for the Nets with 21 points, Richard Jefferson added 18 as New Jersey lost its sixth straight to match its longest losing streak of the season.

NBA BRIEFS

Shaq has MRI on ailing hip, out 2 weeks

MIAMI (AP)—Shaquille O'Neal will miss at least the next two weeks because of recurring pain in his left hip and leg, the latest piece of disappointing news for the reeling Miami Heat. An MRI exam performed Tuesday on O'Neal's ailing hip found acute inflammation in that joint and his quadriceps muscle. He will be treated with ice, but won't do any basketball-related activity—with hopes that rest will cure the problem. O'Neal will miss at least six games, barring a change in the rehabilitation schedule. The earliest he could return under the timetable released by the team is Feb. 6 at Detroit. "His activity, the activity, is exacerbating it," said Heat coach Pat Riley, whose team has lost 14 straight games, three shy of matching the franchise record. "That's all. That's what happens. He's trying to do everything he do. He's gotten all the treatment he can get. And now it's probably going to be an inactive period of time until the thing heals." O'Neal was not available to reporters Tuesday. He has missed an average of 20 games over the past six seasons because of an array of injuries, and still has two full seasons after this remaining on his five-year, $100 million contract with Miami. Other tests done Tuesday, including bloodwork, ruled out the possibility of infection or other problems, the team said.

Nene's testicular tumor was malignant

DENVER (AP)—A testicular tumor removed from Denver Nuggets forward Nene was malignant. The team said Tuesday the tumor was discovered early, and tests showed the cancer was isolated. "The recovery rate is extremely high," the Nuggets said in a written statement. "In addition, the odds of a recurrence are very small." Nene underwent surgery Jan. 14 to remove the tumor. The team statement said he was doing well, but there was no timeline for his return. The Brazilian player's Web site had posted a statement last week saying the tumor was benign, but that announcement later was removed.

Brady's 'bum' foot kicks off Super hype

NEW YORK (AP)—Even by Super Bowl standards, this one has it all. Unbeaten team vs. unpredictable team. Most valuable player vs. least likely Manning. New York vs. Boston. Plus a supermodel, to boot. And kicking off the hype, Tom Brady's bum foot. Who needs Xs and Os, anyway? Bring on Gisele!

The week before the week before the big game has barely begun, and already the buzz is brewing over the New England Patriots and New York Giants. Off the field, especially.

Fine by the NFL. In a league that loves attention and promotes itself with a TV network that provides 24-hour coverage, this is more perfect than the Pats. Besides, isn't this exactly why they have the extra-week break before the game?

Been a while since Joe Namath lounged poolside with the blondes and promised a win, or Jim McMahon paraded down Bourbon Street. Neon Deion Sanders and Terrell Owens were rank amateurs, by comparison.

If Super Bowl XLII publicists needed any more eyeballs, they've found them in XL fashion.

Funny thing, the epicenter of the football world—for the moment, anyway—isn't a snowy practice field in Foxborough, or an indoor bubble at the Meadowlands or a giant dome in the Arizona desert.

Nope, it's a neatly appointed, brick town house on a quiet, quaint street tucked away in the old, historic section of Greenwich Village. That's where the NFL's All-American boy—the dimple-chinned Brady—limped around with a walking boot on his right foot, spending time with girlfriend Gisele Bundchen.

The Patriots quarterback also showed up with a bouquet of flowers. Nice for her; nice for the New York Post headline writers, too.

"FLOWERY TOM A POSY PATSIE," the newspaper blared Tuesday.

OK, hardly the Ickey Shuffle or the Super Bowl Shuffle. But a glam start building toward America's No. 1 sporting event, a game on Feb. 3 in suburban Phoenix that's expected to attract 1 billion viewers all over the globe.

Then again, maybe it's all a ruse. The conspiracy theorists were out in full force Tuesday on WFAN, the all-sports radio station in New York, suggesting that the 18-0 Patriots put Brady in a soft cast merely to confuse the Giants. In fact, there are pictures aplenty on the Web, showing Brady squiring Bundchen from her West Village pad to an East Village hotspot minus the boot.

Brady isn't addressing whether anything is seriously amiss. The two-time Super Bowl MVP simply said he was "a little nicked up" and that "I'd have to be on a stretcher to miss this one."

David Letterman, meanwhile, offered his own plan. The "Late Show" host suggested the Giants might consider slipping last year's Super Bowl MVP, Peyton Manning, into the No. 10 jersey worn by his brother, Eli.

Eli may not have the cachet of his older brother, but at least he did not make the same mistake that Brett Favre did, throwing an interception that cost the Green Bay Packers a chance to beat the Giants in overtime last weekend.

After that victory in the NFC championship game, the brothers talked on the phone.

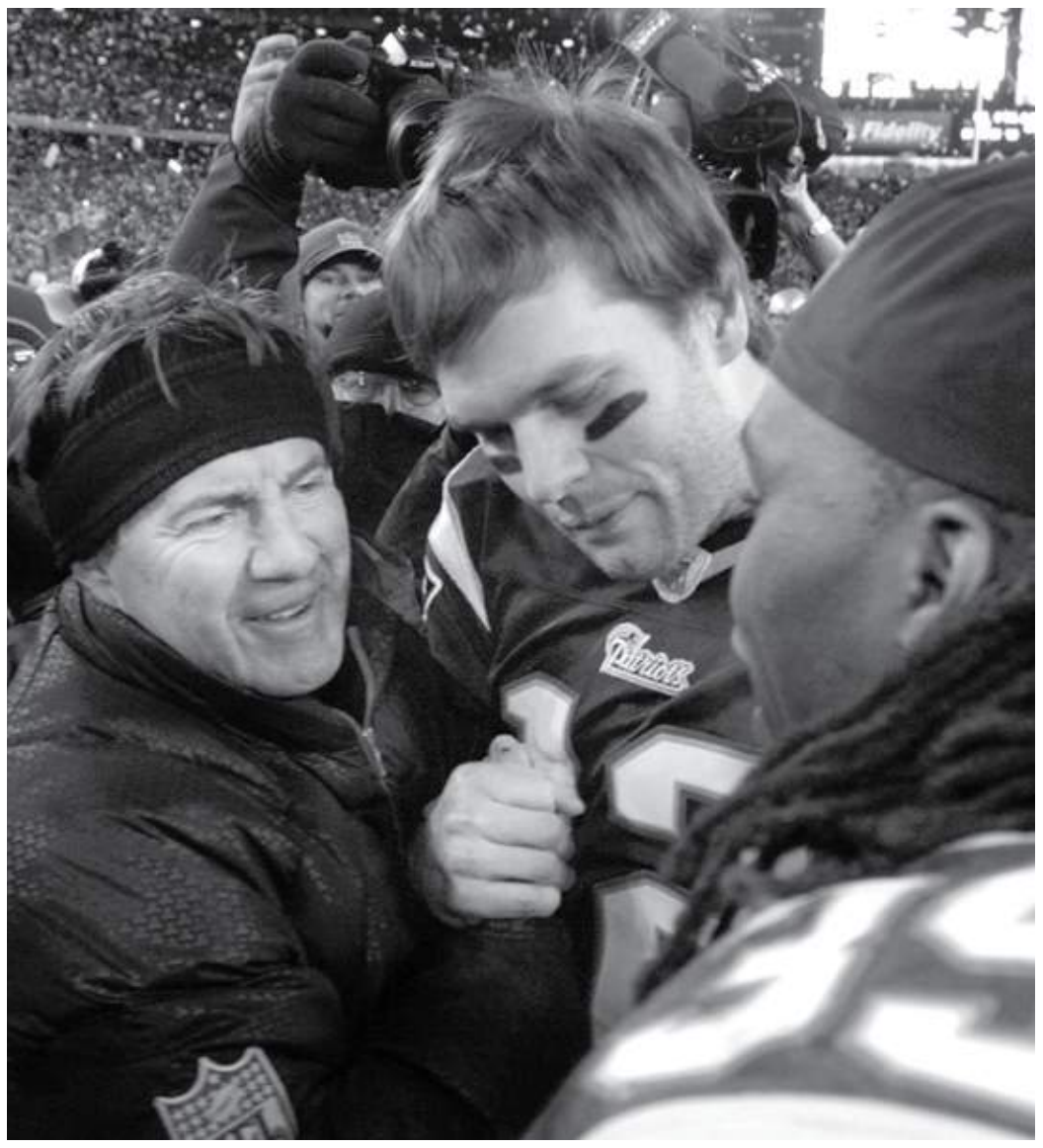
"He said I'm past the point where he can give me advice anymore," Eli said. "He wants it the other way now. I don't know if I agree with him, but it's great to hear it from him. I'll take all the advice I can get."

He's sure to hear plenty. Over the years, the break between the league conference games and the Super Bowl has varied between one week and two weeks. The coaches and players usually want to get going; NFL handlers like the anticipation to percolate.

It's bound to happen, particularly with a built-in rivalry. Beantown vs. the Big Apple once again, this time on the gridiron instead of the diamond.

Leave it to Red Sox star Curt Schilling to throw out the first pitch. Many Yankees rooters still think his famous bloody sock in the 2004 postseason was a stunt, and he knows exactly how rival fans feel about the perfect Patriots.

"I love it," he told the Boston Herald, "that everyone else hates them!"



AP

New England Patriots head coach Bill Belichick, left, quarterback Tom Brady, center, and running back Laurence Maroney, right, celebrate after winning the AFC Championship football game 21-12 against the San Diego Chargers in Foxborough, Mass., Sunday, Jan. 20, 2008, to advance to the Super Bowl.

House committee to subpoena Knoblauch

WASHINGTON (AP)—Four-time All-Star Chuck Knoblauch was subpoenaed Tuesday by a congressional committee investigating steroids in baseball after he failed to respond to an invitation to give a deposition.

Knoblauch, who played for the Yankees, Twins and Royals, was asked to appear Thursday, the first of five depositions or transcribed interviews scheduled by the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee prior to its Feb. 13 hearing.

Roger Clemens was asked to speak to committee staff Saturday, followed by Yankees pitcher Andy Pettitte on Jan. 30. Brian McNamee, a former personal trainer for Clemens and Pettitte, is due in Jan. 31, with former New York Mets clubhouse employee Kirk Radomski asked to appear Feb. 1.

They all had until close of business Tuesday to respond to their invitations; Knoblauch's deadline was last Friday.

"The committee has taken this step because Mr. Knoblauch failed to respond to the invitation to participate voluntarily in a deposition or transcribed interview and the Feb. 13 hearing," committee chairman Henry Waxman and ranking Republican Tom Davis said in a statement.

As of Tuesday, the House panel had at least made contact, if not actually scheduled interviews, with all four other witnesses or their representatives, a senior committee staffer told The Associated Press. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because staff members were not authorized to discuss details of the deposition process.

Lawyers for Clemens and McNamee have said their clients will appear.

"We've been talking. They're not issuing any subpoenas for Brian," said Richard Emery, one of McNamee's attorneys.

It was not clear whether Knoblauch had retained a lawyer to represent him.

"I haven't talked to Chuck in a number of years," his last listed agent with the players' association, Randy Hendricks, wrote in an e-mail to The Associated Press. Hendricks represents Clemens and Pettitte.

In last month's Mitchell Report on performance-enhancing drugs in baseball, McNamee said he injected Clemens with steroids and human growth hormone in 1998, 2000 and 2001, accusations the seven-time Cy Young Award winner has denied. McNamee also alleged Pettitte used HGH, and Pettitte acknowledged McNamee injected him twice while the pitcher was recovering from an injury.

McNamee also told Mitchell that he acquired HGH from Radomski for Knoblauch in 2001 and injected Knoblauch with HGH. Knoblauch also was among nine players accused of doping in a federal agent's affidavit citing former major league pitcher Jason Grimsley.

Knoblauch was an infielder who won the AL Rookie of the Year award with the Minnesota Twins in 1991 and played in the majors until 2002. His time with the Yankees overlapped McNamee's.

All the allegations are for conduct that occurred before September 2002, when players and owners jointly banned steroids.

McNamee has said he obtained performance-enhancing drugs from Radomski, who has pleaded guilty to distributing steroids and laundering money. Radomski's sentencing is scheduled for Feb. 8.

Also, lawyers for players and owners are trying to arrange a bargaining session for late next week to discuss recommendations in the Mitchell Report. Mitchell suggested that drug testing be more independent.

Holmgren will return as Seahawks coach

KIRKLAND, Wash. (AP)—Before Mike Holmgren decided to return for one—and only one—more season coaching the Seahawks, he signed a new pact. Not with Seattle ... with his wife.

"She's making me fill out this little contract: 'Upon completion of your last game: The laundry; the garbage; the whole deal,'" Holmgren joked Tuesday when asked what he may feel like after he fulfills the final season of a two-year contract.

What if he really does want to keep coaching beyond a 17th season as a head man in the NFL? What if he wants to keep doing what he's done every football season since 1971, when he was a history teacher and assistant coach at Lincoln High School in San Francisco?

"I've made some promises," he said of Kathy, his wife of 37 years with whom he escaped last weekend to their vacation home in Arizona to contemplate retirement.

Holmgren, nicknamed "The Big Show" when he arrived in 1999 from a Super Bowl pedigree in Green Bay to become Seattle's coach and general manager, thought about the monotonous summers of 22 NFL training camps. Of sleeping in college dorms in beds too short. Of missing "a normal kind of Christmas and Thanksgiving, the things that most people enjoy," with his family of four daughters and four granddaughters.

He and Kathy decided he would do it all one more time.

Still, the 59-year-old former quarterback at Southern California was so uneasy about that choice Tuesday morning he called his wife at her job as a nurse at a clinic in downtown Seattle, just to be sure.

"Look it, it will probably be an emotional time," he said of a 2008 season that will become a farewell tour he doesn't want. "But it is what it is.

"Kathy and I came to this decision to finish my contract. This will be my last year. We are going to work very hard to finish the job that I hoped to do when I first came, that's to get to the Super Bowl and win one. And then probably after that, I will take a little time off—but not yet. We are going to go after it hard."

Two days after Seattle lost at Green Bay in the NFC divisional playoffs, Holmgren was asked if there was a third possibility beyond retiring or finishing the final season of his contract. He signed his extension soon after the Seahawks lost in the Super Bowl to Pittsburgh 23 months ago, at the end of a deal that was paying him about $7 million per season.

Holmgren said yes to the "longer, larger" option of another contract extension beyond 2008, but the Seahawks have never approached him about it.

Tuesday, Holmgren said his comments about an extension were overblown and "misinterpreted," that the decision was always about working one more season or retiring.

The Seahawks have a likely heir to Holmgren in place in Jim Mora.

Soon after Mora was fired as head coach of the Atlanta Falcons on New Year's Day, 2007, Holmgren added him to the staff as the assistant head coach and defensive backs coach. Mora, 46, led Atlanta for three seasons and went to the NFC championship game in his first season there.

"The transition beyond this year should be really smooth. The organization is healthy," Holmgren said.

He didn't mention Mora by name, leaving talk of his successor "for another press conference. I won't be there."

NMIFA opens men's league Sunday

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

Northern Mariana Islands Football Association last Sunday opened the 2008 season of the Men's Winter Football League with three teams debuting with wins in games held at the Oleai Field inside the Susupe Sports Complex.

Multinational FC led the list of opening day winners when it scored a 3-1 win over Independents. Powerhouse Onwel foiled the debut of Ol'Aces in a 10-0 blanking of their opponents, while FC Arirang rallied back to beat rival Inter, 6-3. Real Mariana drew a bye.

Joe Miller had a hat trick to lead Multinational FC's win against Independents, whose lone goal came from Jason Schroeder.

The Independents held ball possession for most of the game but could not find the bottom of the goal against Multinational's sticky defense.

Onwel, meanwhile, had a field day against Ol'Aces, whose players are returning booters after hanging up their cleats for a while.

In the third game, FC Arirang came back from a 0-3 halftime deficit to beat Inter. Arirang scored six goals in the second half to escape with the win.

Arkie Reusora and Peter Houk scored the goals for Inter but fell silent in the second half as they let Arirang took full control of the match.

Inter Saipan, composed mostly of players from the CNMI Men's National Football Team, dominated last year's Men's Summer Open League where they scored a 3-1 finals win over FC Arirang in the Tapochao Derby.

SML continues preparation for 2008 season

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

Saipan Major League coordinator Tony Rogolifoi will again hold a meeting tomorrow to discuss the issue of the usage fee for the lights at the Francisco M. Palacios Baseball Field.

Rogolifoi is requesting managers, coaches, or team representatives to attend the Thursday, Jan. 24, meeting as they continue their preparation for the 3rd Annual Budweiser-SML Baseball League. The meeting will be held at the conference room of the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium at 6:30pm.

Rogolifoi said the main topic for discussion is the usage fee especially during the night games where the Division of Sports and Recreation said that the SML would shoulder.

Rogolifoi added that because of the added cost the SML would shoulder, they would decide on the final amount of the entrance fee for all the teams during the meeting.

He is requesting all seven teams that signified their intention to join the league to attend the meeting. The unofficial list of the teams—which expressed their interest of joining—are the defending champion Tanapag Falcons, 2007 runner-up Bob O'Connor Masters, PTI Kings, Ford Rangers, Korean Dreams, Komoro, and the D9ers.

Rogolifoi is asking the managers of the seven teams to turn in their roster or waiver forms in the meeting. Ground rules will also be given to the team manager, coach, or representative during the meeting.

Rogolifoi is eyeing to open the league on Feb. 25, Monday, and is requesting all teams to be at the FMP Field early for the brief opening ceremony.

The Feb. 25 opening game of the 3rd Annual Budweiser SML will feature a rematch of last year's finals as the Falcons face off with the Masters in the scheduled 6:30pm contest.

The final schedule of games will be releases as soon as organizers get the final number of competing teams in the double-round-robin elimination format league.

The Tanapag Falcons are expected to field the same championship-winning team next season.

For more information, call Rogolifoi at 288-3515 or email him at tonyrogolifoi@yahoo.com.

Eight teams vie for Crime Stoppers Softball title

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSISTANT EDITOR

Eight teams will take part in this weekend's 6th Annual NMI Crime Stoppers Softball Tournament at the Dandan Softball Field.

According to NMI Crime Stoppers chairman Jim Arenovski, this year's event was shortened to two days instead of the usual three because of the low number of teams. He said in the past, 12 teams competed in the tourney.

Unlike years past, the 2008 edition of the annual fundraising event for the island's crime reporting hotline also does not have a home run derby. Arenovski said they will try and resurrect the slugging competition next year.

Action in the NMI Crime Stoppers Softball Tournament starts right away at 9am on Saturday, Jan. 26, with the final game set at 4pm on Sunday, Jan. 27.

Crime Stoppers board director James Matsumoto said the eight teams competing this year are led by defending champion Well Fargo, Shell Marianas, PTI, Vox Vodka and Bing Energy Drink of MARPAC, Pacific Islands Club, United Micronesian Development Association, DFS Galleria, and Marianas Cable Vision.

Arenovski added that fundraising raffle tickets will be sold this weekend through Feb. 29. Prizes include a return ticket to anywhere in Asia from Northwest Airlines, room stay, meals, and water park passes from various hotels, lunches and dinners from various restaurants, and much more.

SMITH

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Kenichiro Watanebe of Japan bested the other 30-39 runners (48:46.05).

The remaining age group winners are all from Saipan with Irineo Isip (50:19.14); Steven Pixley (fourth overall, 45:00.15); and Stan Good IV (1:05:48.62) topping the 40-49, 50-59, and 60-and-up divisions.

In the women's division, Nikki Gabaldon placed third behind overall winner Terri Atkinson of Guam and Hikaru Arai. Gabaldon had a time of 54:42.04 against the 53:17.76 of Atkinson and Arai's 54:27.10.

Fourteen-year-old Madison Schultz, who joined the 10K run with mother Brenda and brothers Kenyon and Crosby, topped the 14-and-under division with a time of 1:10:14.38. Man of the house Rob opted to join the half marathon and completed the 13.1-mile course in 2:03.29.

Katy Johnson, who also joined her parents in the running event, was the best 15-19 age group runner finishing fifth overall with a time of 58:03.97. Her mom Betty finished in 1:08:38.95, while dad Michael joined the Half Marathon and was in 15th overall after crossing the finish line in 1:56.39.

Other female age division winners were Rebecca Newman (20-29, 59:53.07); Japan's Mari Namikawa (30-39, 56:53.92); Melanie Daly (40-49, 1:01:13.37); Suzy Kindel (50-59, 59:08.77); and Setsuko Fujihita of Japan (1:05:57.19, 60-and-up).

The race was held in cooperation with Marianas Visitors Authority, Northern Marianas Athletics, Northwest Airlines, Excite.com, and Oakley.

ISLANDERS

From Page 28

28, 8-15 win to improve to a 3-0 record, while their former co-leaders Menudo and Home Boyz dropped to second and third place in the nine-team field after absorbing identical losses against separate opponents.

By virtue of points scored, points allowed, and number of sets won, Menudo is in second place followed by Home Boyz in at third.

League rules state the first tiebreaker is based on the number of sets won. If a tie occurs, then the second tiebreaker is used based on points against.

CH-Hammer and Fanians barged into the win column after beating Menudo and Home Boyz.

CH-Hammer opened up Tuesday's day of upsets when it pulled off a 25-14, 17-25, 15-10 decision over Home Boyz, while Menudo became Fanians' first victim losing a tightly fought match, 25-19, 17-21-25, 5-15.

The high-flying Fanians of Typhoon Saito, Jazzy Rosco, Julius Saito, and J.J. Neth outsmarted Menudo's tall and talented crew of Tyce Mister, Mark McDonald, Bruce Berline, Dale Roberts, and Apple Samson for their first win after two matches.

Menudo still has the most number of sets won with seven followed by the six each of Islanders and Home Boyz and Ol'Aces' five.

In the other match, Ol'Aces bounced back from Thursday's loss to Home Boyz and dealt Ma Numel'u a straight set 25-22, 25-23, 12-9 beating to hike their mark to 2-1.

In the women's division, Pikan Gaga opened up the women's league with a 25-14, 25-27, 15-9 triumph over Beach Jammers, while YoYo's defeated Seikid, 25-23, 25-19, 20-22.

Four games in the men's division and two in the women's will be played every Tuesday and Thursday where one match would consist of two race-to-25 sets and the third and deciding set is first to make 15.

Tomorrow's games in the men's league will have Ma Numel'u going for their first win when they face Home Boyz in the 6pm opener, followed by the Beach Jammers-No Feat match at 7pm, while CH-Hammer and Fanians clash at 8pm. Menudo takes on the league-leading Islanders in the nightcap.

In the women's division, Ta Chagi will debut against Beach Jammers at 6pm, while opening day winners Pikan Gaga and YoYo's collide in the 7pm match.

For more information, call Cramer at 235-6231 at ext. 5148 or e-mail him at seaexec@pic-saipan.com or Janice Camacho at 868-9515 or 323-6565 or 66 or 67 or 68 or e-mail her at nonose98@gmail.com.

ULLOA'S

From Page 28

make the last decision on whatever call is made. I understand that they are human and make mistakes. But when they tend to be biased that is a different story."

Sablan said that Delos Santos is against him or any team that he played in or coach. "Since I got back from the States in 2000, he (Delos Santos) has been always against us. I think he has a grudge against our team."

The Customs employee even dared basketball officials to do a poll from fans and ask them if Delos Santos is biased or not. "They can do it during the game. Most of the calls in a game were made by (Delos Santos)."

Sablan said he is not blaming his team's loss to the referees but reminded officials to be fair and not take sides. "I have nothing against the [Southern] Sonics, they played their hearts out and they are one of the best young teams on Saipan.

"But when referees tend to be biased or hold grudges against a player it makes it harder for us to play. It is like playing five against seven inside the court," said Sablan, who scored 14 points in the D-1 Ulloa's' 89-96 loss to the Sonics on Monday.

"Sablan said they have been asking BANMI or any league that they play in to stop Delos Santos from officiating. "I always bring up excluding (Delos Santos) in officiating our games. I don't want him to referee our games. We don't have problems with other referees it is only (Delos Santos) that we always encounter problems with."

Sablan said he has coached and played in teams since he returned in 2000 and he has observed that Delos Santos' calls tend to lean toward their opponents.

"Dado (Vistal) gave us one technical foul and the rest came from (Delos Santos). I understand Dado's call, quickly acknowledging it and raised my hand for I am guilty.

"But when (Delos Santos) called a technical on my brother (Joshua) and my brother came and talk to him why the technical foul, he (Delos Santos) immediately blew the whistle and gave him another technical in less than two minutes. I don't understand (Delos Santos)," Sablan said.

Sablan emphasized referees should not be too attached to the game. "It is not a good example to show the kids if a referee has biases. How can I explain to other kids, to young people, that the referees are biased. What am I going to say to my younger brother and the kids that I coach?"

Sablan added that referees are only in the game to make sure it goes on smoothly. "They [referees] take it too much, as if they are in the game. They should let the players play. Don't mind the [physical] play. They should get involved when a player is already getting out of hand.

"That is when they must talk to the guy and remind him that it is only a game. You can play hard but keep in mind not to hurt anyone," he said.

When asked who does he think is the referee who has no biases, Sablan answered Vistal is the most fair, with most of his calls accepted by the players and fans. "But (Delos Santos) tends to mess it up for us.

" I don't know how to explain it but every quarter within the first three minutes the other team is already in bonus situation," he said.

Sablan said he is now planning to video-tape all the games and then send it to FIBA or whoever that is involved in certifying the referees to show proof of how they officiate matches.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	33	6	.846	_
Toronto	22	19	.537	12
New Jersey	18	23	.439	16
Philadelphia	16	26	.381	18 1/2
New York	13	28	.317	21

Southeast Division

Orlando	26	17	.605	_
Washington	22	17	.564	2
Atlanta	17	20	.459	6
Charlotte	16	25	.390	9
Miami	8	32	.200	16 1/2

Central Division

Detroit	29	13	.690	_
Cleveland	22	18	.550	6
Indiana	19	23	.452	10
Chicago	16	24	.400	12
Milwaukee	16	26	.381	13

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

New Orleans	28	12	.700	_
Dallas	27	13	.675	1
San Antonio	26	13	.667	1 1/2
Houston	22	19	.537	6 1/2
Memphis	12	29	.293	16 1/2

Northwest Division

Portland	25	16	.610	_
Denver	24	16	.600	1/2
Utah	24	18	.571	1 1/2
Seattle	9	32	.220	16
Minnesota	6	34	.150	18 1/2

Pacific Division

Phoenix	30	12	.714	_
L.A. Lakers	27	12	.692	1 1/2
Golden State	25	18	.581	5 1/2
Sacramento	18	22	.450	11
L.A. Clippers	12	25	.324	15 1/2

Yesterday's Games

Phoenix 114, Milwaukee 105
Sacramento 128, New Jersey 94

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOCAL SCORES

NMIVA Standings
Men's Division

	W	L	PF	PA	SW
Islanders	3	0	181	169	6
Menudo	2	1	182	158	7
Home Boyz	2	1	174	173	6
Ol'Aces	2	1	181	179	5
No Fear	1	1	124	110	3
Fanians	1	1	117	112	3
CH-Hammer	1	2	160	166	3
Beach Jammers	0	2	101	131	0
Ma Numel'u	0	3	170	192	3
Women's Division					
Pikan Gaga	1	0	65	50	2
YoYo's	1	0	70	64	2
Beach Jammers	0	1	50	65	1
Sekid	0	1	64	70	1
Ta Chagi	0	0	0	0	0

PF-Points for
PA-Points allowed
SW-Sets won

Winter Festival of Runs Awards Ceremony

Photos and Text By
JON PEREZ, REPORTER

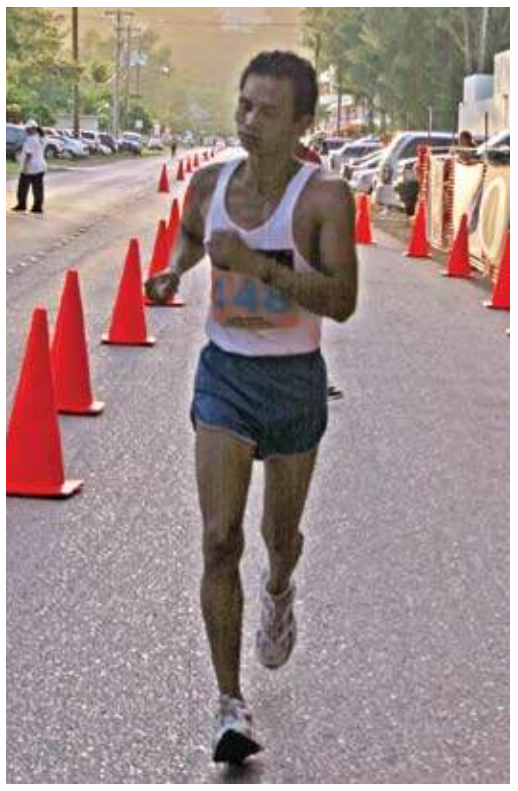
Saipan's Akiko Hagiwara shows off her trophy and cash prize after placing second in the women's division of the Half Marathon.

Top, the Top 3 male and female runners in the 10K run share a light moment at the winner's podium. From left, Stuart Smith, Ronald Villafria, Nikki Gabaldon, Hikaru Arai, Kazuyoshi Tokumoto, and Terri Atkinson.

Right above, men's and women's age division winners in the 10K run pose for photographers during Saturday's banquet.

Right, Men's marathon winner Noboyuki Yamamoto, right, joins fellow finishers Yoshihiro Narui, center, and Hideyuki Iwai for a group shot.

A participant in the Half Marathon reacts after crossing the finish line.



A runner crosses the finish line of the 10-kilometer run in last Saturday's 2008 Winter Festival of Runs at Micro Beach at the American Memorial Park.

Full Marathon winner Mamiko Oshima, left, of Saipan poses with Xiang Shan Cui at the winner's podium.

A participant in the Half Marathon crosses the finish line.

A participant in the Half Marathon walks the final stretch to cross the finish line.

Saipan's Dirk Sharer nears the finish line.

NMIFA opens men's league Sunday

Northern Mariana Islands Football Association last Sunday opened the 2008 season of the Men's Winter Football League with three teams debuting with wins in games held at the Oleai Field inside the Susupe Sports Complex.

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Ivanovic knocks Venus out at Aussie Open

Venus Williams followed her sister Serena out of the Australian Open in the quarterfinals, both in losses to Serbian players. Venus went down 7-6 (3), 6-4 to fourth-seeded Ana Ivanovic on Wednesday, a day after defending champion Serena lost to No. 3 Jelena Jankovic.

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Jones tops Wakai Nekko No Kai golf

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSISTANT EDITOR

Benjamin Jones topped the Wakai Nekko No Kai Friendship Golf Tournament held yesterday at the Coral Ocean Point Golf Resort.

The 50-something former PSS physical education instructor finished the double Peoria-format competition with the best net score of 70.2 after going 43 in the front nine and a 44 in the back for a gross of 87. His handicap for the tourney was 16.8.

Jones was followed in the leaderboard by a couple of former national players in Nick Sablan and Jeff Taylor, each finishing with an identical net score of 70.8.

Sablan, who captained the 2003 Suva, South Pacific Games golf team, shot a gross of 78 following a 40-38 in the first nine and last nine holes.

Taylor, who was a member of the 2006 Saipan Micronesian Games golf team, also fired a 78 on the power of his twin 39s in the front and back nines.

Although, both had similar 7.2 handicaps, Sablan took first runner-up honors on a scorecard tiebreak.

Another former national player, 2003 and 2006 member Jess Wabol, finished fourth and part of the money list with a net score of 71.2. Wabol actually had the day's lowest score at two-under 70 (35-35), but the double Peoria scoring penalized the former Oleai Elementary School principal with a -1.2 handicap.

For landing in the Top 4, Jones, Sablan, Taylor, and Wabol went home with $400, $300, $200, and $100, respectively.

Tournament organizers Marianas Visitors Authority, Saipan Mayor's Office, and Northern Marianas College also gave away in-kind consolation prizes to players who ranked fifth to 10th.

Manny Tenorio and Mariano Bermudes finished fifth and sixth with the same score as Wabol's. Joji Taguchi, another ex-national player, landed seventh with his 71.8. Joe Tudela and Gerald Guerrero finished with the same score as Taguchi's but had to settle for eighth and ninth, while rounding out the Top 10 was George Sablan with his 72.

A total of 58 players took part in the fund-raising activity to help the Wakai Nekko No Kai continue its voyages to the CNMI.

The ocean university has been visiting Saipan for 39 years and has brought a total of 16,000 students to the CNMI.

A 2008 Toyota Yaris was dangled as the hole-in-one prize in hole No. 12, but none of the 58 golfers was up to task and none drove home with the spanking new sedan.

Tudela, meanwhile, captured the closest to the pin award in hole No. 7 and won the special prize of $120 and an LG cellphone from SaipanCell Communications.

Present during the Wakai Nekko No Kai Friendship Golf Tournament awards banquet were Washington Representative Pete A. Tenorio, MVA board directors J.M. Guerrero and Yoichi Matsumura, NMC president Carmen Fernandez, and Saipan Mayor's Office public information officer Anthony Benavente.

Benjamin Jones shows off his trophy and cash prize after winning the Wakai Nekko No Kai Friendship Golf Tournament yesterday at the Coral Ocean Point Golf Resort.

MARK RABAGO

Ulloa's player criticizes referee

MARK RABAGO
Ulloa's John Sablan attempts a shot against Sonics' Pete Mendiola in a file photo from the championship of the BANMI 25-and-under Basketball Tournament.

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

Ulloa's guard John Sablan singled out referee Noel Delos Santos as biased against them and has the tendency to make questionable calls.

Sablan, in a telephone interview yesterday, made the comment in reaction to Basketball Association of the Northern Mariana Islands referees' director Arnold Mesa's remarks on Tuesday that players should respect the calls being made by local referees.

"He (Arnold Mesa) is asking for players to try to respect the referees. I have been in basketball all my life and I believe the players and fans do respect the calls."

Sablan said there is nothing more the players and fans can do if the referee blew the whistle or tend to miss a violation. "The referees do

See ULLOA'S on Page 26

Smith leads local runners in 10K

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

Stuart Smith led local runners' charge in the 10-kilometer event of last Saturday's Winter Festival of Runs from Micro Beach at the American Memorial Park.

The 10K run attracted the most number of participants with 110 (58 male and 52 female). A total of 230 runners from Guam, Japan, Saipan, and Tinian joined the event with 47 conquering the 26.2-mile marathon while 73 opted to choose to run in the scaled-down course.

JON PEREZ
Angelo Jones, left, and Madison Schultz pose for photographers after receiving their medals for topping their respective age divisions in last Saturday's 10-kilometer run of the 2008 Winter Festival of Runs at the Hyatt Regency Saipan.

Smith was the top finisher among the Saipan runners after placing second to Japan's Kazuyoshi Tokumoto. He completed the course in 40 minutes and 1.68 seconds, which is more than seven minutes after Kazuyoshi's 31:54.42 time.

Last month's 25th Christmas Island Relay solo runner Ronald Villafria came in third in the men's division with a time of 41:43.22. The Coco's Restaurant employee ran solo in the island relay on Dec. 29 completing the 13.7-mile journey from Pacific Islands Club in San Antonio to the Last Command Post in Marpi in 1:48.50.

Eleven-year-old Angelo Jones led the male age group winners when he finished 22nd overall in 55:50.73. Northern Marianas Athletics' Nathaniel Mateo was sixth overall and the top 15-19 age group runner in 46:49.10.

Long-time Saipan resident Daisuke Matsuo won the 20-29 division (47:13.78), while

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Islanders remain undefeated, women's league opens

By JON PEREZ
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Islanders found themselves alone on top of the standings after erstwhile leaders after Home Boyz and Menudo lost their respective matches in the continuation of the 2008 Men's Indoor Volleyball Winter League Tuesday night at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

The women's indoor league also opened Tuesday night with perennial title contender Pikan Gaga and up-and-coming YoYo's scoring consecutive wins against their opponents.

The Islanders were pushed to the limit by Ma Numel'u before slipping out with a 25-22, 30-

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